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Sermons

BY THE

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RECTOR OF CLAPHAM.

THREE VOLUMES IN TWO.

VOL. II.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

BOSTON:

R. P. & C. WILLIAMS, CORNHILL-SQUARE,
(BETWEEN 58 AND 59 CORNHILL.)

S. Etheridge, Printer.

1822.

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SERMON XIII.

ON THE PROPER EFFECTS OF THE HOPE OF HEAVEN.

2 Peter iii. 12.

*Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of
God.*

IT is a most painful proof of the imperfection and depravity of our nature, that even the highest and noblest parts of religion itself, the subjects which occupy the constant attention of the blessed inhabitants of heaven, the motives which influence their noblest exertions, the causes which produce their highest happiness, operate upon our minds with a languor and feebleness which as there can be nothing defective or weak in them, argues a lamentable degree of imperfection in us. In truth, our minds are so indisposed to receive the same impressions, and experience so little congeniality with eternal subjects, that we scarcely give them any serious consideration. We regard them as if they were merely temporal, and we regard temporal subjects as if they were eternal. We thus are ever reversing the proper order of things.

and our conduct and feelings are at variance with the convictions of our judgment. We believe that this life is a mere point, in comparison of the life to come: we act as if it were infinitely more important. We believe that the life to come will endure through endless ages: we act as if it were as short as the present fleeting existence. We believe that this life is a scene of vanity and vexation: we act as if it were the only place of rest and enjoyment. We believe that heaven is the seat of infinite and ever-during happiness, in which age rolls on after age, in endless succession without any diminution of enjoyment: we act as if it were not worth our while to bestow any pains in securing a share in that heavenly inheritance.

It may be said, indeed, that if our minds were occupied by the contemplation of heaven, in a degree proportioned to its excellence, we should be unfit for the ordinary business of the world. "This world" it may be said, "is doubtless a poor and mean place, in comparison of heaven; its employments low and sordid; its enjoyments few and imperfect and transitory: yet it is the world in which our Creator has placed us for a time; and he has given us capacities and feelings and tastes congenial to it. He has made it necessary for us to toil and labour in it; and the constitution of the world is such as to require attention and activity, and a considerable degree even of eagerness and solicitude about worldly things, in order to discharge the necessary offices of life. It becomes our duty, therefore, while we are in the world, not to undervalue it too much, nor to long after another in such a manner as would tend to disqualify us for this."

This objection would be very formidable, if it were founded on true premises: for, undoubtedly, whatever tends to unfit us for the ordinary duties of life, as well as whatever tends to render us dissatisfied with our present lot, must be wrong. But it will be easy to shew that all the objections which represent that joyful hope and earnest desire of heaven which religion inspires

as incompatible with the business of this life are founded upon a misapprehension of the *nature* either of that *hope*, or of the *proper business* of life.

1. If our hope and desire of heaven were of a nature to produce either *discontent* or *listless indolence*, with respect to the affairs of this life, we admit they might fairly be represented as injurious. But this is very far from being the case. Indeed, there is nothing which tends more to repress discontent, and to excite a cheerful spirit of thankfulness to God than the hope in question. It soothes us amidst all our troubles with the cheering contemplation of a glorious state of rest and enjoyment, when this short and fleeting life is ended. It represents all the afflictions we suffer here as very light, as enduring but for a moment, and as working out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal, weight of glory. What man will be discontented with his state, be it what it may, if he knows that it is but for a moment, and if he has before his eyes a scene of boundless happiness to which it is introductory? No: it is the man who is earthly-minded, who builds all his hopes on this world, and expects no other enjoyment but what this uncertain life may afford: he it is who when he is crossed and disappointed in his expectations, is apt to murmur at his lot, to sink into despair, and even to loathe the boon of life. A worldly frame of mind is fitted to feel trouble and affliction keenly and bitterly: heavenly mindedness teaches us to use the world without overvaluing it: to enjoy its lawful pleasures, yet not unduly to grieve for their loss. And if ever religion fails ultimately to produce cheerfulness, it is because it has not had its proper and full influence; it is because it has not yet produced a lively and cheering hope of immortality.

Neither does a just hope of heaven tend to produce a *listless indolence* with respect to the lawful business of this life: for heaven when rightly understood, is but the perfection of holiness, the complete and perfect fulfilment of the will of our heavenly Father. 'The

happiness of heaven consists in submission to God's appointments, and active obedience to his will. It is not a paradise of sensual enjoyment, and dishonourable sloth; but it is the exertion of the best energies of the soul, directed to the highest and noblest objects. He, therefore, who entertains a just idea of heaven, and desires its happiness, will be disposed by that very desire to be active in doing whatever is pure, and just, and honourable and holy: and his activity will flow from the noblest and the most powerful motives by which men or angels can be influenced.

2. The objection is likewise founded on a misapprehension of the *proper business of life*.—If, indeed, the business of life consisted in accumulating worldly conveniences, in obtaining worldly possessions, in gratifying to the utmost worldly passions, then the hope of heaven, deeply implanted in the mind, might unfit us for an eager application to such pursuits; but the true business of life, as intended by our Creator, and sanctioned by reason and religion, is of a very different kind: it is to fulfil most conscientiously all the duties we owe to God; the duties of piety, love, reverence resignation, confidence, humility, obedience;—as well as the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures. It is to be diligent in the discharge of the duties of our station: to be meek and merciful, kind and forgiving, just and temperate in all our conduct. And as for worldly desires and pleasures, our business is to bring them under subjection; to be very moderate and guarded in our pursuit of them, while we sit loose to the world, despise its vanities and are indifferent to its pomps. If this be a just view of the business of life, it is evident that, in the hope of heaven, there is nothing which does not coincide with it, and which will not tend to make a man fulfil, more faithfully and diligently, every obligation of life.

Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that the grand business of religion, is to correct those views, and mortify those dispositions, which nourish worldliness of mind.

We must remember that this is a fallen world, and that we inherit a corrupt nature; and that God has ordained religion as a means of weaning the heart from the love of the world and its objects, and fixing the affections upon higher and better things above. This life is not the whole, nor even the principal part, of our existence; nay, it is only an extremely small part of it. We are apt, indeed, to place far too high a value upon it. But it never ought to be considered, by us, in any other view than as it stands related to the life to come; the life which endures through millions of ages; the glorious inheritance to which we are born again in Christ Jesus. Hence religion is continually setting before us that world, and that life, and exhorting us to become dead to this world; that a better life may be laid up for us above with Christ in God. How reasonable and how just an expectation! My brethren, if there is indeed an eternal life to come, never, never ought it to be long absent from our contemplation. It ought to be the grand regulator of all our present desires, hopes, pursuits, and employments. Never, never do we live aright, because we never live rationally till our life here is rendered wholly subservient to that which is to come. Never can we have even the true enjoyment of this life till we are *looking* for and *hasting* to the coming of Christ; *looking* for it with anxiety, as the consummation of all our wishes; and *hasting* to it, as a person just finishing a painful journey hastens his steps as he draws near to his beloved home.

The hope of heaven is a principle peculiarly Christian. Life and immortality were communicated by Christ. Heaven is his kingdom, prepared by him for the reception of his disciples, that where he is there they may be also. In the heathen world, the views of a future state were too dark and uncertain to render it an object of hope or strong desire; and, even in the Jewish dispensation, the nature of the life to come, its certainty and glory, were only darkly revealed, and became a strong spring of action only to the few who studied

the Word of God with a more than ordinary degree of attention and humility. But our blessed Saviour, who is himself the Resurrection and the Life, has revealed to us the future world fully and clearly: he has set it before us, as a constant object of hope and motive to action,—the purest, the noblest, and the strongest which can animate the human breast. The possession of this hope lightens every care; soothes every sorrow; and enables us to bear the heaviest afflictions without repining. It endears to us the blessed dispensation in which it is revealed: it gives a new, a holy, a delightful aspect to this life, and elevates its importance when considered as a preparative for endless felicity: and it throws a glorious splendour about that exalted Saviour, who bestows upon us such an inheritance as the reward of our faithful service. Through this glorious hope many have triumphed in the flames: others have been tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection: and the whole body of real Christians, in every age, have held on their way, through the wilderness of this world, patient, and even joyful in tribulation; they have lived in all purity, and died in peace: trusting, through a Saviour's intercession and grace, to obtain a glorious kingdom above.

My Christian brethren,—on whom, as your minister in Christ, it is my duty to urge every Christian motive,—I earnestly and affectionately pray that I may be made instrumental, through the Divine blessing, in building you up in your most holy faith, and in training you for the mansions of eternal glory. You believe in the life to come: you acknowledge that heaven contains every thing to which your purest and dearest hopes can aspire: but still I fear lest the impression produced by this persuasion should not be deep, and powerful, and abiding. It is possible to hold all Christian doctrines, and yet to hold them so coldly, so negligently, so much as a mere matter of speculation: that no practical benefit, no regenerating influence on

the heart, no sanctifying operation on the life, no joyful elevation of the affections, is derived from it. May you, my brethren, so hold every Christian doctrine as to derive from it all the good which it was intended to communicate; and, in particular, so to hold the doctrine of the life to come; that it may engross your best contemplations; that it may intermix itself with all your feelings; that it may become your grand, ready, and universal ground of action; that it may give the tone to your whole character; that it may be your chief consolation, your great source of joy, your support in trials, your crown of glory in prosperity, your delight through life, your triumph in death. God grant that I may be enabled so to instruct and exhort you, and so to direct you to Him whose power is almighty to bless his servants, that these may be the happy effects resulting from your belief of the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ and the possession of the hope which they inspire.

But before these effects can be expected to follow from the hope of future glory, it is necessary that it should be *strongly felt*, and that we should be able to *appropriate* it to ourselves.

1. Faith is defined by the Apostle to the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; that is, it gives a deep and abiding subsistence in the mind to all the objects of our hopes, and it causes things invisible to become as clear and obvious to us as if they were the objects of our sight. We ought, then, so to believe in the happiness of the world to come, as if we actually saw the heavens opened, and witnessed the glory there enjoyed. What impression would not such a view be calculated to make upon us! How continually would it be the object of our meditation, the subject of comparison with the present world! How frequently should we refer to it as the standard by which all our ideas of excellence should be tried! How scrupulously should we direct the course of our life here, so as to secure an inheritance in it! Now true faith gives that credit to the revelation of God which we

give to the testimony of our senses; and, if we are fully persuaded of the truth of Revelation, we ought therefore to think, and feel, and act, as if we had seen the judgment-seat of Christ, beheld the awful doom of impenitent sinners, and witnessed the glories of the blessed inhabitants of heaven. What manner of persons, then, ought we to be in all holy conversation, who have such hopes set before us! O let us live more according to those hopes; more as the heirs of such an inheritance! Let us more frequently contemplate the bright prospects set before us. Let us pray for the Spirit of illumination and grace by which we may know what is the hope of our calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of Christ. How would even one quarter of an hour employed each day in serious meditation on eternal things raise us above this vain world! What transporting views would it not open to us! What different feelings respecting all the troubles and events of this life would it not give to us! Let me entreat you, as you value heaven and the hope of dwelling in it hereafter, not to permit this world to engross your thoughts when God has set before you another, so infinitely more worthy of your solicitude.

2. But then the grand endeavour should be to *appropriate* this hope to yourselves.—It is not sufficient that a hope of glory should be laid up for the righteous, and that so many precious promises have been made to the church of Christ: you must lay in your claim to a participation of them, you must appropriate them to yourselves; you must yourselves possess a lively hope, and be looking for and hasting to the day of the coming of Christ, as the great day of your hopes, of your deliverance from evil, of your long-expected salvation.

But in order that your hope may not ultimately deceive you, it must be *well founded*. God forbid that you should, upon slight and insufficient grounds, take up a hope which, whatever present comfort it might afford you, would only terminate in your destruction.

Too much care cannot be bestowed in examining the foundation of your hope; and it is infinitely better to be in a state of salvation, though we derive no consolation from the hope of it, than to abound in hope and joy, and, at length, to find that hope and joy vain and deceitful. Great caution should, therefore, be used in the indulgence of hope; but then, on the other hand, when well founded, it should be carefully cherished. The Scriptures evidently mean to communicate hope. The whole tenor of the Gospel is calculated to impart it. All the primitive Christians rejoiced in hope. It cannot be doubted that hope, if well founded, would have a most powerful effect both upon our comfort and our improvement; and that it will have this effect exactly in proportion to its being well founded. Let us not, therefore, cast away our confidence, because it is liable to be abused; nor, in all cases, reject the comfort of hope, because in some, it may not be well founded. Let us seek for the grace of hope; but let us search our ways and try our hearts, in order that our hope may stand the test of that day, when righteousness will be laid to the line and judgment to the plummet.

What is the just foundation of hope it would be impossible to describe, at much length, in a single sermon. It is, in fact, the grand object of my preaching to explain that point, and to press it upon your consideration. It will be sufficient to observe, in this place, that all our hope must be built upon what the Son of God has done and suffered for us. His merit must form the true and only basis of our hope, and on his gracious intercession in our behalf must our confidence be placed. But when this is acknowledged in the fullest manner, it must still be observed that our hope has not been truly built upon the rock of our salvation, unless we also find that it has received the sanction of the Spirit of God, by the fruits which it produces under his holy influence. An unholy person ought not to rejoice in hope; and before he can, he must have done violence

to his conscience, which will again and again resist all efforts to create a peace and hope which are not well founded.—And here appears the value of a just and scriptural system of religious doctrine. A false and erroneous system may encourage a spurious hope; but with a true system no one can attain to a blessed hope of immortality, unless his conscience first sets to its seal that he is faithful and upright before God. It is the business of many persons to labour after the possession of a joyful hope by clearer views of doctrine, by resting more resolutely upon some particular promise, by an exclusive attention to the consolatory passages of Scripture; but their hopes, so acquired, are often suddenly thrown down by the stubbornness of conscience, which will not sanction their delusion. What such persons want is a purer conduct, rather than clearer views of doctrine. Let them pray more seriously; let them read the word of God more attentively; let them be more careful to omit no duty, and to persist in no sin; and this conduct will more speedily and more certainly produce in them a more solid hope, than any mere improvement in their doctrinal system.

Indeed, it is well for us that it pleases God, in general, to withhold peace wherever it ought not to subsist, and that he has entrusted conscience to give its sanction to peace; else multitudes would fatally deceive themselves by an unfounded hope, which would awfully disappoint them at the last day. Conscience is God's vicegerent, and our guard: let us reverence its monitions, and it will be equally faithful to God and friendly to ourselves.

There are many, however, who have the testimony of their conscience, and of the word of God, that they are entitled to a joyful hope of the glory ready to be revealed. Faithful disciples of Christ, acknowledging with all humility, their unworthiness, and lamenting it continually before God, yet resting on the gracious promises of a Saviour, and the value of his atoning blood, and walking circumspectly in all uprightness of

heart, they have a good foundation for this hope. They ought to know, and to value, and to exercise their high privilege. Let them, with thanksgiving to God, and with overflowing joy, look forward to the bright scenes of future bliss; and, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, contemplate them as their own inheritance. One view of that glory, realized by faith and appropriated by hope, will have an inconceivable influence upon its possessor. It will arm him with the fortitude of a martyr; it will invigorate him with the strength of an angel, the strength of faith and love. It will console him with joys and consolations: such as the blessed Apostle felt, whom no trials or sufferings, of an earthly kind, could move. It will elevate devotion by a gratitude unspeakably great, for it will be gratitude for the hope of heaven. It will render all earthly trials light, and all earthly enjoyments vain; for, weighed in the scale with heaven, they will both be lighter than vanity.

But the chief advantage of such a joyful hope of eternal happiness is found in the powerful motive which it affords to holiness, and the increased efficacy which it gives to all the means of grace. Filling the soul with love to God and an ardent devotion to him, it purifies the heart, even as God is pure, as heaven is pure, as all the joys of heaven are pure. Great also is the encouragement it imparts in resisting the world, the flesh, and the devil. For with the prize of our high calling immediately in view, how low would the gratifications appear which these tempters could offer to us! Whilst we derive little consolation from the service of Christ, and are harassed by doubts and fears whether after all we shall succeed in our arduous spiritual contest, no wonder that our hands hang down and our knees are feeble. But when heaven is before us; when its glories already dawn upon us; when the celestial gate is already opening for our admittance, and the mansions are prepared in which we shall dwell for ever; who would not endure, who would

not suffer, who would not persevere with unshaken faith and immoveable constancy?

Let us, then, my brethren, press forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us seek for a hope full of immortality. Let us be looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.

SERMON XIV.

GODLINESS PROFITABLE TO ALL THINGS

1. Tim. iv. 8.

Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.

WHATEVER advantage may have been allowed to godliness with respect to the world to come, it has been but too frequently considered as not only useless, but sometimes even hurtful, with respect to the present life. A strict regard to prayer and other devotional duties has been thought to unfit men for the business of the world; to throw a shade over the enjoyments of life; and to render it tedious to themselves and gloomy to others. This is a serious charge confidently brought by the dissipated and the profane, and too hastily believed by the young and thoughtless.

Without, however, entering into a very minute consideration of the nature of religion, and the improbability of its producing these bad effects, it might be justly concluded, at once, that this charge must be unfounded. For is it probable, is it possible, that a sin-

cere desire to serve our Creator with the faculties he has given, in the station in which he has placed us in the world which he superintends, should only serve to produce unhappiness, and to disturb and confound the business and enjoyments of life?

Two mistakes have concurred to produce this injurious prejudice against religion; one respecting the *nature of godliness*, the other respecting the *proper business of life*.

1. It has been assumed, that godliness consists in prayer and devotion only; but this is an erroneous and partial view of its nature. Godliness, indeed, does consist partly in devotion; but, then, devotion is to be considered not as godliness itself, but as a means of acquiring it;—it is the acknowledgment of the need we have of it; the serious review and confession of our neglect of it; the solemn determination of the mind to be more stedfast and immoveable in the pursuit and practice of it. Even the more speculative parts of religion; the truths which it develops and the motives which it prescribes, are intended to have a direct and powerful effect upon practice: “The grace of God hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”

2. A mistake has also prevailed with respect to the proper business of man in this world. If, indeed, it be considered as our proper business here to pursue, with insatiable eagerness, the honours or riches of the world, to despise a low situation, to grasp at all the advantages which are thrown in our way, without, perhaps, any scrupulous attention to the lawfulness of the end in view, or the purity of the means employed to attain it; if the enjoyments of life are regarded as consisting in the unrestrained indulgence of our appetites, in the gratification of a selfish and sensual disposition, in mirth and riot, in extravagance and debauchery; if such be the proper business of life, and such its best enjoyments, godliness, it must be confessed, **unfits a man for**

both. But if the great business of life be to discharge, with fidelity and integrity, the various duties of the station in which God has placed us, to improve our time and talents, to watch over and regulate our corrupt affections, to prepare for our future audit at the bar of God; in short, to serve and glorify our God, and to assist others in doing the same; if the proper pleasures of life be such as spring from a thankful enjoyment of God's mercies, a spirit of good will to our fellow-creatures, a mind regulated by the precepts of Scripture, and a hope full of immortality; then godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

It is, therefore, a great mistake, to suppose the advantages of religion to be confined to another world. They equally affect the present life and all its employments: they extend not to individuals only, but to societies, to nations, to persons also of every temper and disposition, placed in all the diversified circumstances and situations of life. Godliness instructs and assists, encourages and animates us, in the great work of reforming whatever is amiss, and altering whatever tends to the general unhappiness of mankind. Its tendency is to make this life not merely a preparation for the kingdom of heaven, but a resemblance and portrait of it.

This will more evidently appear if we carefully consider the benefits of godliness, both to the person who practises it and to society at large.

I. Godliness, then, is profitable to the person who practises it, from the effects which it produces on his own mind. These effects are of two kinds: the *regulation of the passions*, and the *production of inward peace*; and that *in all states and circumstances of life*.

1. Godliness regulates the passions.—I need not observe, that it is the tendency of the passions to deceive, enslave, and hurry into misery and ruin those who, neglecting the Gospel, neglect the remedy which

God has assigned against their too-powerful influence. Lust, vanity, envy, anger, impatience, pride, and avarice, like wayward children, torment the breast which nourishes them. How vast a multitude have been sacrificed ere they have lived out half their days, to excessive drinking! How many from the love of luxury and dissipation, plunge themselves into poverty, debt, and imprisonment! Not a few, urged by avarice, and lured by the hope of gaining at once a large fortune, ruin themselves, their families, and perhaps many other innocent and worthy persons, who had been induced to confide in their integrity. How many, from the peevishness, impatience, or impetuosity of their tempers, are perpetually disquieted themselves, and disquieting all around them!

Such are a few of the effects of the tyranny of ungoverned passions. Indeed, the world is full of misery through their influence. Now, it is the end of godliness to prescribe bounds to their operations, to counteract their evil tendency, and to resist their impetuosity. The man who is truly godly watches against their first movements, ere yet they have conceived, and brought forth sin. He is afraid of those earthly indulgences which minister fuel to their unholy fires; he is taught by the Gospel of his Saviour to deny himself, and to be engaged in mortifying the corrupt affections of the flesh, as well as in resisting the devil. And thus, while in others, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are gratified, and by gratification cherished and strengthened, the truly godly person is employed in crucifying them: he sets not his affections upon the things of the earth, but on the things above. He esteems himself dead to the world, and his life is hid with Christ in God.

2. Neither does godliness produce tranquillity of mind, merely by bridling the impetuosity of the passions; but it also directly communicates peace of soul, by means of the views which it imparts, and the hopes which it inspires: and this inward spiritual peace dif-

fuses a serenity over the mind under every change of temporal circumstances, inclining the godly person to recognize and adore the goodness of God, even in the midst of tribulation and distress.—Who ever engaged in earnest prayer to God, without finding that he came from his closet disposed to bear affliction more patiently, and to rejoice in his temporal mercies with a more pure and solid satisfaction?

But here it must be observed that this exemption from the dominion of turbulent passions, and this peace and serenity of mind, are confined principally to those who are really in earnest about religion. Let not such as are contented with a superficial knowledge, and still more superficial practice of the duties of godliness, imagine that they shall possess these high privileges. A slight degree of religious progress serves often only to irritate the passions; to awaken apprehensions; to produce anxiety and terror; and to fill the mind with a fretfulness and gloom, which extend their influence to all the circumstances of the temporal condition. The high and ennobling principles of the Gospel must be wrought into the very frame and texture of the soul, by much reflection and constant prayer; the hope of glory must be realized to the mind, by frequent and deep meditation, and the power of the Redeemer, in his various offices be habitually acknowledged and felt, before true peace, the peace of God, is shed abroad in the heart.

3. Godliness is further profitable in all the *various tempers and states of mind* to which human nature is liable: for the religion of Christ, by which the godly person is influenced, applies itself with wonderful ease and readiness, as an universal remedy, to all the diseases of the soul.—Is any one hurried away by a fickleness and levity of temper, which prevents application; let him embrace, by faith, the truths of the Gospel; those truths which present to his view the awful realities of the invisible world, the shortness of time, the nearness of eternity, the strictness of the day

of judgment, and the worth of the soul. These subjects are calculated to make the most giddy sober, and the most dissipated serious; to correct the faulty dispositions of the mind, and to enable it to apply with vigour to the various duties of life. Is any one, on the other hand, a prey to melancholy thoughts, which throw a gloom over every earthly prospect of felicity? Would to God, that he knew those glad tidings of great joy, which are represented in Scripture as making the dumb to sing, and the lame man to leap as an hart! Oh that he understood what treasures of mercy are laid up by God for the penitent! what blessings are communicated to those who put their trust in God!—Does any one labour under a covetous temper; under a heart hardened against the wants of his fellow creatures? What is likely to soften him into liberality and compassion, if the free forgiveness and boundless grace of Christ Jesus do not produce this effect? Or would you reclaim the prodigal, whom the impending ruin of his family is unable to move? Behold how godliness is profitable to this end also; for it will bring back the prodigal, crying, “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee.” True godliness will humble the proud, and make the timid bold: it can correct all the weaknesses of human nature, and supply all its wants. And as the Son of God, when upon earth, healed the sick, cast out devils, gave sight to the blind, caused the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak; so that there was not one disorder which baffled the power of his word: so his Gospel, the knowledge of which is the very foundation of godliness, is able to heal all the diseases under which the soul of man can labour.

4. Godliness is, in the last place, profitable in all the varying circumstances of life in which we can be placed.—It is the ornament of *youth*; a crown of glory to the *hoary head*. It will preserve the *rich* from being elated by their wealth, or putting their trust in uncertain riches: the *poor* from being discontented or repining at their state, by making them rich in faith and heirs of

the kingdom of God. In times of *public* calamity, and in scenes of *private* suffering, he that has made God his refuge will find a most secure abode. Changes and afflictions various and frequent, and as melancholy as they are unavoidable, are incident to us all. And how bitterly are they felt, when we are deprived of the consolations which true godliness holds out to us! How hard is it to bear the loss of property; to have our hopes of a comfortable subsistence for ourselves and our families at once cut off, perhaps through no fault, or defect of prudence on our part; and to be left a prey to melancholy fears of want, after the labour of a whole life has been spent, and supposed to be successfully spent, in acquiring a decent provision! How painful to be bereaved of those in whom our life was bound up; a dear wife, or an affectionate husband, or a dutiful child, the very stay and support of our lives! How painful to meet with unkindness in others, perhaps in those whom we have greatly served; and to see ourselves as we are growing older, less and less valued, and losing by degrees one and another of the comforts of our life! How painful to feel ourselves subject to some fatal distemper which we know that medicine cannot relieve, which holds us as prisoners in our houses, which destroys our activity, consumes our vigour, drinks up our spirits, and leaves us melancholy and dejected; dead even while we live in the world! How painful to feel ourselves likely soon to be called away from a family that depends upon us for support, with the distressing reflection—worse than death to a parent's feelings—of leaving them destitute, dependent upon the bounty of strangers, and exposed to all the miseries of want! These are evils bitterly felt by thousands and tens of thousands in the world; and, could we open the book of futurity, which of us here present might not see that some of those evils await us?—Now, is not godliness profitable for this life, if it will help us through all these afflictions? Can its value be described, if it will enable us to bear such calamities as these with patience? Nothing but godliness, it

is evident, can do this. All things beside do not even promise a resource. Wealth itself becomes disgusting under many of these circumstances: the heart turns with aversion even from the most favourite pursuits. But let godliness, in its sovereign power, be felt, and mark the effect which it will produce. It will instil into our minds patience and submission: it will lighten our burden, or communicate strength to support us under it. It will teach us to look at joys that never fade, at a portion which shall never be taken from us, to an Almighty God, and to a wise and gracious Father. Faith will inspire us with fortitude and hope; will cheer us with the prospect of a better world to come, where every tear shall be wiped from our eyes, and where all things shall be made new.

There is still one more trying scene through which all must pass, and in which the excellence of godliness is eminently conspicuous. When you come to a dying bed, supposing you to have lived without godliness, and there seriously reflect upon all you have heard of the righteous judgments of God against sin; when in these circumstances you look into the invisible world and consider what might have been gained in it, and what may now be dreaded: how awful the loss of the soul, and how intolerable the ruin which is to last for ever; melancholy indeed must your reflections be! Keenly will you then feel that godliness might have been not only the repose of a dying bed, but its consolation and joy; for it is equally profitable at the extremity of our lives here, as at our entrance upon the life to come.

II. Hitherto we have only considered godliness as profitable to the individual who practises it, and noticed the peace which it secures to him in the various circumstances of life; but godliness is profitable also in a much wider extent. All who dwell near a truly righteous person will be partakers of the benefits and blessings derived from real religion.—The *children* of a godly parent will have their minds stored with useful instructions, will be guarded against the influence of

evil passions, will be treated with tender attention, be saved from many a hurtful lust, and many a pang of remorse, and reap an abundant harvest of prayers. *Children* that are pious will bear with patience the infirmities of age, and will be dutiful and affectionate; for piety will remind them of obligations which human nature is too apt to forget, and strengthen the bond of natural affection by the ties of duty and gratitude.—*Servants and Masters* who truly fear God, and are carefully endeavouring to please him, will live in peace and mutual confidence. Angry passions will not disturb the quiet of the dwelling, nor will discontent embitter domestic enjoyment. How tranquil, how blessed, the family, where every member of it, possessing peace in his own soul, through the knowledge of God, meets the rest to minister to their comfort, and increase their inward happiness by acts of cheerful attention, kindness, and love: where no jarring string interrupts the harmony of the whole, no evil passion disturbs the tranquillity of the rest!

But, alas! where are such scenes to be found? Too rarely, I allow. Godliness flourishes not in this our polluted earth: it is like a plant in an unfavourable soil, where its growth is stunted and its beauty injured. But we see the tendency of religion to produce happiness in the earth, and wherever it is cordially embraced and seriously cultivated, there, in a proportional measure, is this tendency manifested. Let the precepts of the Gospel be assumed to have their full influence:—let us suppose, for example, a family “loving without dissimulation, kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another, not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; minding not high things, but condescending to men of low estate, remembering to no man evil for evil, providing things honourable in the sight of all men” and surely such a family would be a blessing to the whole neighbourhood.

Enlarge this view, and suppose (what is, alas! but too unlikely soon to happen) the whole world partaking of the same spirit, and how profitable would godliness appear for all things, even in the present life! There would be no jealousy between subjects and their governors, no party spirit of animosity, no more war and bloodshed. The sword would be beat into the plough-share, and the spear into the pruning hook. Every man you met would be a brother. No scenes of cruelty would shock the eye; no cry of oppression would wound the ear. Tyranny and slavery would be only remembered with a sigh that human nature should once have suffered them. The voice of joy and praise would be heard in every cottage, and the sufferings which still remained in the earth would be alleviated by the affectionate tenderness of every neighbour and every stranger; for every stranger would be a friend. The wolf would indeed dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid.

But, alas! how different is the scene which now presents itself! The eye must yet be pained to behold the tumults and distractions of nations; the ear to hear the lamentations of misery and the groans of despair. Armies yet meet together with savage ferocity, and spread around them desolation and carnage. While we contemplate such scenes, let us read in them the inscription of Heaven, drawn indeed in bloody, but legible, characters; "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come."

All misery and evil came into the world by sin; and in proportion to *its* increase, in that proportion do *they* increase also. The real evils which God inflicts are comparatively few in number, and, with them all, he mingles something which may alleviate them or compensate their pressure. But the evils we bring upon ourselves, or which our fellow creatures bring upon us through their vices, are many and complicated. There is, however, one remedy of sovereign efficacy which

God in his pity, has given us against evil of every kind: "*Godliness is profitable for all things.*" In proportion as godliness is practised, evil will be less abundant and less keenly felt; and blessings will spring up and multiply upon us. Let us see, therefore, that we are seeking after godliness with that earnestness which becomes its importance to ourselves and to mankind.

But it must be remembered, that godliness is not a cold assent to the truths of religion: it is not a natural softness and benevolence of temper; it is not the abstaining from gross sins, or the giving to God a part of our hearts and some vacant portions of our time, while the bulk of both is alienated from him, that will entitle us to the benefits which follow godliness: No: godliness is the entire subjection and devotedness of the soul to God himself. It is the practical acknowledgment of his unlimited sovereignty, and the unreserved dedication of our whole selves to his service. To speak in the emphatical language of the Apostle, It is Christ formed in the heart by the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit; in consequence of which the person becomes a new creature both with regard to his temper and practice: he partakes of a Divine nature, and those members which were formerly the servants of sin are now employed as instruments of righteousness unto God. This is real godliness: this is what is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. The form of godliness, too often and too fatally mistaken for it, brings no just peace to the mind; does not implant there the love of God; does not correct the faulty dispositions of the heart; is of no service in the distressing scenes of life; and is attended with no good to society. From this shadow of godliness the opinions of the world have been too generally taken respecting its substance, and its effects estimated: and hence it has appeared to be so barren of good and so useless to mankind, neither promoting their peace nor their virtue.

Let us, therefore, seek for something more substantial. Under the deep impression of the corruption of our nature, let us breathe after the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God; and pray earnestly to obtain the mind which was in Christ. Let us remember that the Kingdom of God consists in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and that he that serveth Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved of men.

I speak, I am persuaded, to many in this place, who highly honour and earnestly desire that godliness which produces such beneficial and blessed effects. Let them, then, take heed that they possess right views of its nature, and seek for it in a proper manner. True godliness is the gift of God. It is a seed implanted in the heart by his Holy Spirit, and watered by the dew of his heavenly grace. It is not the produce of merely human resolution, the fruit of a corrupt nature. It is absolutely necessary, therefore that it should be sought from God by fervent prayer, cherished by the study of his word, and cultivated by constant communion with him. It is utterly impossible that we can be truly godly unless our hearts are right with God, unless we are deeply convinced of the supreme excellence of his nature, the amiableness of his character, the reasonableness of his commands, and the infinite superiority of his service above that of the world. The foundation of godliness is deeply laid in the just views of the soundest reason. It is not the impulse of caprice, the dictate of fear, or the effect of the love of change; but a deliberate conviction of the judgment, founded upon the most weighty considerations, and confirmed by the most unequivocal experience, that only in proportion as we know God aright and are conformed to his image can we be truly blessed. And it is intimately connected with the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Saviour, in whom we may truly be said to have our spiritual life, in whose death we trust as our atonement for sin, on whose resurrection

we found our hopes of eternal life, on whose intercession we rely for the acceptance of our prayers and unworthy services.

This is the principle of godliness; and when such a principle is implanted in the mind, though its full operation may be prevented by those innumerable temptations which assault us from within and without, from the world, the flesh, and the devil, yet it will influence the soul to obey and serve God with earnestness and constancy. There will be an increasing wish and desire to please him, greater readiness to make the sacrifices he requires, and greater faithfulness in acting up to the light we have received. Every thing else will yield to this prevailing desire of our hearts. We shall not attempt to serve two masters, but give ourselves up wholly to God. The soul cannot, indeed, be wholly turned from darkness to light, from sin to holiness, at once. It is a change which begins here, and is carried on through the whole duration of life, but which is not perfected till we arrive at the kingdom of heaven above. "The path of the just is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and the small measure of knowledge and grace to which we attain on earth, will be a seed springing up unto immortal life, in the everlasting glory of which it will assuredly terminate. *Amen.*

SERMON XV.

MEETNESS FOR HEAVEN, WHEREIN IT CONSISTS.

Colossians i. 12.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

WE have a very low and imperfect idea of the nature of Christianity, if we consider it only as it stands connected with this life, and our happiness on earth. Doubtless it ministers to our peace and comfort *here*; it regulates our passions, and directs us to discharge the duties of our several stations with fidelity and diligence; but the same end is proposed, though it may not be so fully attained, by every scheme of philosophy and religion which has been taught in the world. Christianity has a view to far nobler and more extensive objects: it is to be considered as connected with God's glory, as well as man's happiness; with the honour of Christ, as well as man's salvation; and with the boundless ages of eternity, as well as the few years of man's ex-

istence upon earth. The plan was formed; the sacrifice of the Lamb of God appointed, and men were destined to inhabit the realms of glory, before the foundations of the world were laid. The ultimate end was to bring them to heaven; the means, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the sanctifying power of his spirit; the subordinate end, the preparation of a corrupt race for that state of glory which they who were made meet for it should inherit.

The consideration of such an end in view, goes far to explain the reasons why such means are used, and why the purity and holiness required are so very great. Imagine the chief object of the Gospel to be that of regulating our unruly passions, so that we may pass our lives in ease and comfort here; and there appears but little reason why the Son of God should be our Redeemer, or why we should need the teaching and sanctification of his Spirit. The light and strength of reason might accomplish this end: or, at least, a much smaller portion of virtue than Christianity requires would be sufficient to attain it. There would be no occasion for that high degree of self-denial; that mortification of sin; that deadness to the world; that knowledge of God and his attributes, and those holy affections which it enjoins. A Deist might be a good neighbour, a useful citizen, a tender father, and a kind friend.—But take into consideration a future state, the nature of heaven, the glory of God and of Christ; and we see that a real Christian only is fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light. He alone possesses those dispositions, those sentiments of devotion, those holy affections which are the proper qualifications for such a state. The morality of a Deist would be sufficient, were his soul as mortal as his body; but when we consider man as an immortal spirit, training up for happiness in heaven, we see the absolute need of the Gospel to prepare him for it.

Christianity, then, is intended to make us meet for heaven. By nature we are unfit for that blessed place:

our desires and pleasures, our habits of acting and modes of thinking, the motives and principles by which our conduct is framed, are all unsuitable. We could contribute nothing to the bliss of its inhabitants, nor could they minister to ours. The very enjoyments of the place would be no enjoyments to us.—But by the influence of the Gospel, where it strikes root in the heart, a new and divine life is begun; in which may be perceived the rudiments of heavenly virtue, the seeds of infinite happiness, and the elements of eternal glory. There may be traced in it the same principles which operate in the glorified spirits themselves; the same end in view,—the glory of God; the same renunciation of our own will; the same agency producing peace and holiness, namely the Holy Spirit; the same sentiments of gratitude, and songs of praise, and objects of adoration; the same harmony and love; the same sources of refined and sacred pleasure. The difference in all these respects lies rather in the degree of strength, and purity, and completeness, than in the kind. Every thing below is weak, is imperfect, is defiled; but, as far as there is the spirit of true Christianity at all, it is of the same nature, has the same end, is produced by the same Agent, as the blessedness of heaven.

Consider Christianity in this light, and we shall see why it should require from us a much higher degree of purity and holiness, and other kinds of principles and affections, than would be necessary were its operation confined to the present world. The nature of the education which we give to a child is directed by the station of life which he is intended afterwards to fill. To the heir of a great empire we should endeavour to communicate not merely the principles of honesty, frugality, and common justice; but virtues of a higher and nobler stamp; such as munificence, magnanimity, and comprehension of mind. Now this life is our school for heaven; and, under the tuition of the Gospel, we are trained for the exercises and enjoyments of heaven. Hence a high degree of purity and strictness is de-

man led;—desires rising above this sordid earth, and stretching into immortality; holy affections and heavenly graces such as will be called into exercise in that better state, and make us meet to enjoy it.

Of the nature of heaven, it is true, we do not know much. The account given of it in the Sacred Writings is very short; and consists chiefly in general descriptions, suited to convince us that it is a happy and glorious place, rather than to inform us in what particulars the happiness and glory of it consist; yet from the kind of happiness described; from the nature of the employments of its inhabitants, and the account given of their tempers and affections, we may form some estimate of what will conduce to make us meet for it: at least we may, in many cases, very certainly conclude what would unfit us for the enjoyment of it.

We know, for instance, that whoever is made fit for heaven, must be made so by a taste for devotion.—One principal employment of the saints in light is worship. In almost every glimpse afforded us of the eternal world, we find the angels and spirits of just men made perfect, bowing with adoration before the throne of God. When Isaiah saw the Lord of Hosts on his throne, he was surrounded by the seraphim worshipping him, and crying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”—When St. John was favoured with an heavenly vision, the “living creatures around the throne” (emblematical representatives either of the church or of its ministers) “rested not day and night; saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” And when those living creatures give “glory, and honour, and thanks unto Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever, the four-and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure

they are and were created." And again, he "beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

Now what meetness can he have for such employment who has no taste for worship here; who when he comes to the house of God comes only out of form, with a careless mind, and wandering thoughts, and finds no delight in the exercise? What meetness would he have for the perpetual worship of heaven, who has been unaccustomed to all prayer in secret; and who, if forced upon it by his fears, or by his conscience, does but find the more certainly how much he dislikes it; who is soon weary of all such service, and would esteem it the greatest mortification to be compelled frequently to join in it? Would such a person be meet for heaven? Would it be agreeable to *his* taste? Would he think it a place of consummate felicity, and rejoice that he had now obtained the completion of his happiness;—all that an immortal spirit could desire; all that God could give? He has obtained—what? An entrance into the temple of true worship. He has gained—what? The liberty of serving day and night before God, with high adoration and heart-felt praise.—Alas! how evident is it that, unless he has a taste for such exercises, he could find no enjoyment in heaven, even if he were admitted there!

But worship in sincerity and truth supposes *knowledge and love of the Object of adoration*.—Without knowledge, our worship would be an irrational service; without love, it would be tedious and constrained. In

order, therefore, to make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, it is necessary that we should be trained up in the knowledge and love of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ. The angels and spirits of just men made perfect are represented as adoring God for his attributes, and Christ for his work of redemption:—subjects with which they appear to be well acquainted, and to contemplate with supreme delight. The holiness of God is celebrated, in a more especial manner, by them; but this is an attribute on which he who is not himself holy, would choose least to dwell. And the redemption of Christ is the grand subject of praise for all the redeemed: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain; for he hath redeemed us, and hath made us kings and priests to God.” But how much would he be at a loss to join in the notes of heaven, to whose mind such subjects were strange; whose thoughts had moved in another channel; whose affections had been fixed upon other things; who had no taste for contemplating the glory of God; no eye for beholding him in his works; no delight in meditating upon his attributes! How ill would he be qualified to join in the song to the Lamb, who never had considered the state of man by nature, and sought for redemption in Christ; who had flattered himself with the idea of his sufficient virtue, and therefore neither had known any need of a Saviour, nor felt any obligation to him! How ill would such an one be prepared to fall at the feet of Jesus, and adore him with rapturous expressions of gratitude, love, and joy! No: it is the man who has loved, though he has not yet seen him; who “though he has seen him not, yet, believing in him, has rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory:” it is he who has been “constrained by the love of Christ;” who, even upon earth, has sought “with all saints, to comprehend the length and breadth, the depth and height” of that love, and has found it “to surpass his knowledge:” it is he who has made it his chief study “to grow in grace, and in the knowledge and love of his

Lord and Saviour;" he it is, who is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Let us attend, also, to *the society* of heaven, to those who inhabit that region of happiness.—"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God." To what company then, O thou that art unholy, wouldst thou join thyself if thou wert admitted into heaven? Search the whole extent thereof from one end to the other: try every individual of those countless hosts. Whom wouldst thou discover, to listen to the effusions of thy polluted mind? With whom wouldst thou concert plans of iniquity? To whom couldst thou make boast of thy intemperance, or tell thy wanton tales, or detail the exploits of thy licentious mirth? How solitary to thee must be that crowded place?—The prophets would turn indignant from thee. The Apostles would behold thee with terror. The pure angels and archangels, who never knew what sin was, would flee from thy presence with consternation. Wouldst thou accost those who had been thy companions in sin upon earth, but who afterwards repented and were converted? Ah! what lively emotions would thy presence excite in them, of gratitude to God who had pitied and redeemed them when in thy state, and of self-reproach and humiliation to think they were once like thee! These who, when on earth, dissolved the ties of friendship, to be separated from thy company, would they now welcome thy conversation? Or, indeed, couldst thou endure theirs? How tedious did the time appear, how dull and stupid the conversation, if thou wast compelled to be, for a season, with the pious upon earth! What constraint didst thou not feel! What desire to quit their society! What liberty the moment thou couldst rejoin those friends whose taste and conversation were as carnal as thy own! And couldst thou bear to dwell for ever with Apostles and Prophets:

with them whose every sentiment and expression was pure and holy—in exact unison with those pious writings which thou couldst not read without weariness and dislike?

But heaven is also the *residence of God*; there his glory is seen, there he calls his favoured servants to the highest enjoyment, in permitting the nearest approaches to himself. In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Now to make a person meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, for the presence of God, what purity of heart must necessarily be required! What fear, and awe, and reverence and gratitude, and love? The unholy shall not stand in his sight, nor the workers of iniquity. How then shall they be meet for his presence whose hearts are swayed by lust, pride, or vanity, or any other corruption of our nature? How will they stand before him, to whom the very thought of his inspection was painful while upon earth? How shall they find happiness with him who disliked to converse or even to think of him: and who had no conception of the holiness for which he is adored? How can they make it their employment to do his will, who during life have disregarded it; and preferred their own pleasure, and treated it with contempt when pressed upon their notice? How can that holiness be now their study and delight, which hitherto has been no object of their desire or pleasure; nay, perhaps, has been their aversion and scorn?

Flatter not then yourselves, ye that are unsanctified and unrenewed, flatter not yourselves that heaven would be a place of enjoyment and happiness to you, even if you were admitted there. It would by no means suit your disposition: and either its nature must be changed for you, or you must be changed for it. Its society you would dislike; its employments would be burthensome; its pleasures painful to you. If there were many such as you there, confusion and misery would reign as on earth, and the happiness of heaven would

be destroyed. If few, there would be dissent and separation, and its harmony would, at least, be interrupted. —But you will probably say, “It is true, that with my present dispositions and inclinations, I should not have a sufficient relish for the purity of Heaven, but I consider that God prepares his creatures for every state in which he places them: in this world, my faculties are suited to worldly objects; and when I am removed into another state, I trust that God will prepare me for it, by giving me suitable dispositions.” You expect, then, that at the time of death, some great change will take place, which will fit you for heaven, and give you all those holy dispositions which you are conscious you now, neither possess nor love? But you forget that heaven and hell are states of reward and punishment; and that, therefore, the righteous only can be admitted into heaven. Our state of probation is on earth; the time for this change of nature is the present. “Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” Here is the intermixture of the righteous and the wicked; here men are to profit by good examples: here instruction is given, the means of grace provided, and a Saviour offered to redeem and intercede for sinners. Doubtless, God could make the necessary changes even after death. But is this to be expected? Why should he work a miracle to effect that which may be done by the ordinary and appointed means of grace? Why, when you have been living by choice, in sin, and, after all present advantages, shall remain unfit for heaven, should he destroy, as it were, your personal identity (for such a change would amount to that) and make you at once a new creature, annihilate the dispositions and habits of your mind, give you higher powers and purer affections, and transform you into his own image? Is this his usual course of proceeding? He changes the heart, it is true; but it is before the hour of death. When the soul quits this mortal tabernacle, its state is irrecoverably fixed; the man remains the same, though the scene of his residence be changed. All beyond is but a con-

tinuation of former habits of mind, a progress either in holiness or in sin. The character is then determined for ever, and things are left to their natural course. All that now stops the sinner in his iniquities, or that disturbs the righteous in his advances toward perfection; the restraint of law, the checks of reproof, the benefit of example on one side; and the body of sin, the existence of temptation, the society of the wicked, the separation from God and good spirits, on the other;—will be then no more. Each disposition shall have free scope, and proceed, without impediment, in its career of good or evil.

The temper, therefore, which is fit for heaven, must be formed below: the seeds of grace must be implanted and begin to grow in this life. The qualifications for the enjoyment of heaven must be acquired on earth. As the tender infant whose pleasures and pains are, at present, only those of inferior creatures, has yet faculties beyond theirs, and is trained, by a well-directed education, to pursuits and enjoyments of a much higher kind; so the Christian, though, in the feeble infancy of his divine life, he may seem but little different from the world around him has yet a new nature, with high desires and holy affections, which, under the discipline of Christ's Gospel, and the guidance of his Spirit, is formed even in this present state, for the occupations and the joys of angels.

But how, it will be asked, can such a disposition either be formed or cherished in a world like this? I answer;—A world constituted like the present seems no improper school for the formation of it. How fit a place is it to teach us the *evil of sin*, under which we daily smart, and the effects of which we daily behold! How well does it discover to us the necessity of God's government, and the equity and excellence of his law! Where should we learn the indispensable obligation of full submission to his will; but in a world in which misery, and discord, and confusion, arise from the opposition of human wills and their perpetual struggles

for pre-eminence? What can be a better state for teaching us the fear of God, than one in which the peace and order we enjoy is derived chiefly from obedience to him? What so proper to make us value the uninterrupted happiness above, as the storms and troubles of this unquiet world? Sweet, indeed, is the haven to mariners who have long been buffeted by the waves! Where such a school, in which to learn the love of God, and his infinite mercy towards mankind, as that world which has been the theatre of so astonishing a display of it? Carry me not to the bright courts of heaven, to behold the splendour of Divine goodness; but bring me to the hill of Calvary, and there let me learn it, at the foot of that cross upon which the son of God, my Saviour, hangs as a propitiation for my sins! What a display of the Divine attributes is here! Angels themselves look down from heaven to learn, with mortals upon earth, the manifold wisdom and goodness of their God. And would we be fitted for ever to serve him, to join in eternal Hallelujahs to him and to the Lamb; surely a residence in this sinful world, struggling with many temptations and exposed to many dangers, and, above all, experience of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, will prepare us for it, and give us the sentiments and affections which it demands. Thus we are trained up, that heaven may be the place of our own choice, that the dispositions which will render the enjoyment of it desirable may be formed in us, and, in part, exercised by us; and that we may set a proper value upon that happy state, where nothing is transitory, nothing mixed and alloyed with sorrow, nothing polluted and sinful; but where God reigns amidst a fair and holy creation, surrounded by creatures perfectly fulfilling his will, and perpetually glorifying his name.

One reflection I will make on this subject.—It is not, then, enough that we should be just and moral: there must be something in us more than this;—a holy disposition. We must feel the pleasures of piety: we must

derive our comforts from it. Many approve religion, because it seems an easy way of pleasing God; a decent thing; that requires but little of our time, and is a proper element in life. But if they were reduced to take comfort in it, they would be as much at a loss as those who had lived without God in the world. They are astonished, perhaps at the impiety of the profane; but they wonder, too, as much at those who would make every day a day of worship. They enjoy no more the pleasures of piety, than the pleasures of profaneness. In their calculations of enjoyment and of happiness, religion has no place. When they fall into misfortunes, they never think of using it as their comfort; but try to make themselves quiet and contented by other means. To so little purpose do numbers profess the Gospel! How little does such a negative sort of goodness fit them for the enjoyments of heaven! How little does it produce of thankfulness, of love and cheerful obedience! How little is it like the spirit of the Apostles! Let us follow after those things which make for our eternal peace, and labour to be meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Lastly, ye who humbly hope that, through the great mercy of God, ye are made heirs of the kingdom of heaven, consider what effect this hope should have upon you: what *thankfulness* it ought to excite; and what *vigilance of conduct* it ought to produce.

I. What *thankfulness*.—If there was ever cause for thankfulness, it is when man is made an heir of heaven. Reflect on his natural state: a *sinner*, exposed to wrath; the slave of Satan; the heir of destruction; serving divers lusts; full of every evil disposition and vile affection!—Behold the change!—This heir of misery, and slave of sin, is redeemed—redeemed by the sufferings, and by the death of the Lord of men and angels; made the object of his pity and love; sealed by his Spirit; comforted by his promises; raised to dwell and reign with him in heaven; and a new nature is given to prepare him for it.

Now can this change be thought of without wonder—without joy—without gratitude? Is it a light thing, or to be classed with common mercies? No! if there be a spark of sensibility, of grateful feeling in the soul, surely this is calculated to call it forth. What then should be your feelings toward God and Christ? How reverently should you adore your Father who is in heaven! How should the rich love and matchless grace of your Redeemer inspire your heart with wonder, and your tongue with praise!

2. What *holy and vigilant conduct* should it inspire!

Thou, O Christ! art a child of God, and an heir of the kingdom of heaven; training up for immortality and glory. Consider, then, what manner of person thou oughtest to be. Should not thy reflections be of this kind: I am not of this world, even as my Master was not of this world. I am not, therefore, to have my mind engrossed with its vanities. From my former vain conversation I have been redeemed. I should not be occupied even by the business of the present life, as if it were my all. My treasure is above. My home is not here. I must live as a pilgrim and stranger upon earth.—All the doctrines of the Gospel are practical, but none more than this. This requires purity of heart, as absolutely necessary to prepare us for heaven. Our holiness is not, indeed, the foundation of our claim: it is not the cause of our obtaining heaven; but it is our qualification for the enjoyment of it. It is the seal of God's Spirit preparing us for it. Let us bear, then, in mind the conclusive reference of the Apostle: "Seeing these things are so, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

SERMON XVI.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT, THE PRESERVATIVE FROM THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH.

Galat. v. 16.

This I say, then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

THESE words contain *a direction*, and a declaration of the happy effects of following that direction. The effects are such as will be most highly esteemed by every serious Christian: being no less than the subjugation of those lusts of the flesh which it will be his ardent endeavour, his unceasing prayer, and his greatest pleasure to subdue.

The direction is most important, not only on account of the importance of the end at which it aims, but on account of the person who gives it. To whom can we listen on such a subject with the certainty of being directed aright, if not to an Apostle? Whom else can we follow implicitly, under the full persuasion that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord? Here, then, is his

counsel: If ye wish not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh walk in the Spirit.

We shall inquire, from these words,

I. What we are to understand by the Apostle's advice of *walking in the Spirit*.

II. To what extent we may expect the effect of following this advice to take place: *Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*.

I. We are to inquire what it is to walk in the Spirit.

I scarcely need to observe that the Spirit of God is always represented in the New Testament as the Author of all holiness in the hearts of Christians; whence the Christian dispensation is eminently styled "the ministration of the Spirit." Now the Apostle Paul, in speaking of the influence of the Spirit, uses such terms as these: being "after the Spirit," being "in the Spirit," being "led by the Spirit," "living in the Spirit," "walking after the Spirit," "minding the things of the Spirit."—These expressions, however, though they may appear to a superficial observer to mean the same thing, are not all to be confounded with each other as perfectly synonymous, since the Apostle manifestly makes a difference between them. Thus: "They that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit;" minding the things of the Spirit is, therefore, not the same thing as being after the Spirit, but the effect of it. Again; "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit:" here, also, to walk after the Spirit is the effect or consequence of our living in the Spirit. To be in the Spirit, therefore; to be after the Spirit; or to live in the Spirit; seem to describe that participation which every real Christian has in the influences of the Spirit of God. In such the Spirit of God is said to dwell: He is in them a quickening Spirit; through their union with him, they are one with Christ, and Christ with them: and in this respect their participation of the Spirit is absolutely necessary to their being in Christ, or real Christians. "If any man," saith the Apostle,

"have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." By him they are sealed to the day of redemption. Their bodies are said to be his temple, in which he is supposed to reside. However the degree of his influence may vary, yet this union to the Spirit, and his residence in them, are supposed to be perpetual, in the case of real Christians, from their first faith in Christ to their entrance into glory. "I will send you the Comforter, and he will abide in you forever."—And in consequence of this union to the Spirit, which they are supposed to possess, there are peculiar duties required of them. They are exhorted not to "grieve the Spirit;" not to defile the body, which is his temple; not to "quench the Spirit;" to "mind the things of the Spirit;" to "walk after the Spirit."

This view of the Christian's constant union to the Spirit of God, and of the various duties which are derived from such an union, will assist us to understand the meaning of the phrase in my text: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

The general idea seems to be this:—Since the Holy Spirit is the author of all holiness; and since, according to his promise, he resides in you who are baptized into the name of Christ, and truly believe in him, you are to cherish his influences, if you would indeed be delivered from the lusts of the flesh; you are to commit yourself to his guidance; act in dependence upon him; attend to his directions; use the means he has appointed for the communication of his grace; in short, you are to exert your utmost efforts to promote his gracious influences upon your heart; and thus, "ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

So much for the general idea of the Apostle in this passage, let us now consider more particularly what may be supposed to be included in walking in the Spirit.

1. And first I imagine, that *a regard to all the great evangelical principles* is implied in the words "walk in the Spirit."—In the Epistles to the Romans and the

Galatians, in which the phrases of walking "in the Spirit" or "after the Spirit" are chiefly used, the Apostle takes much pains to wean the Judaizing converts from a servile spirit of dependence upon the law, and to instil into them a spirit of liberty in Christ Jesus. He represents it as the cause not only of their serving God with the spirit of fear and bondage, but even of their being under the dominion of sin, that they were destitute of just views of the grace which was in Christ. To be under the law was, in his mode of arguing, nearly the same thing as being under sin. "When we were in the flesh," he says, "the motions of sin which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Wherefore, ye also, my brethren are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God."—The Epistle to the Galatians was written with the particular view of opposing the error into which they had generally fallen, of placing their dependence for justification upon the observance of the law. He exhorts them, on the contrary, to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free; and taking occasion to mention the divisions and contentions there were among them, refers to this as one cause of those evils, that their principles and motives were not sufficiently evangelical. "Walk therefore in the Spirit," he says, with reference peculiarly to the ruling principle of their conduct, "and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh:" for, as it follows in the next verse but one, "if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" and therefore it is implied, "sin shall not have dominion over you."

The principles from which a person acts have a constant and powerful influence upon his conduct. It is scarcely possible for one whose views are confined and

gloominess to act in a liberal and open manner. Let a man's ideas of God and of his service be narrow and dark; let him conceive of him as a jealous and unreasonable Master; let him conceive the duties required of him to be a task rigidly enforced, the reason and propriety of which he does not perceive, and the burden of which is relieved by no delightful and animating considerations of the nature of the service, or the excellence of him to whom it is due; and what can you expect but a service reluctantly and imperfectly performed,—a service without spirit, a bondage and a burden, a nominal and outward obedience while the heart is withheld?

Now to “walk in the Spirit” is, I apprehend, to entertain and cherish those views which are directly contrary. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” The dispensation of the Spirit reveals the glory of the Lord, opens the treasures of his grace, exhibits him as a kind and tender Father, offering pardon and peace and eternal life to all who come to him in Christ. It shews the exceeding riches of his grace and the infinite extent of his love. Taught by the Spirit, we draw nigh to God, as children, and cry, Abba, Father: enlightened by him, we see something of the length and breadth, and depth and height of the love of Christ, and are filled with joy and peace in believing: animated by him, we run the race set before us with the well-founded hope of victory; trusting in the mercy of God, and influenced by the constraining love of Christ. This disposition of mind so necessary to our Christian progress, the Spirit peculiarly conveys to those who believe in Christ; and hence to “walk in the Spirit” may be justly considered to imply the cherishing of such views and such a disposition as are suitable to the Gospel dispensation; and as it is the design of the Spirit, both in his word and in his operations on the soul of believers, to convey.

2. By walking in the Spirit may be also implied habitual *dependence upon his help*.—It is not enough

that God is pleased to administer salvation to man by the death of his Son and the influence of his Spirit; he requires that man should believe in the one and should seek for the other. The plan of salvation is adapted to us as rational creatures; and, therefore, proper knowledge and suitable dispositions are required of us. Now, as the merits of the death of Christ are only received by faith, so neither are the influences of the Spirit to be expected but in a way of dependence upon him. To walk in the Spirit, therefore, is to acknowledge with the heart our own weakness and inability to serve God; to expect victory over sin only by the gracious operation of his Spirit; earnestly to solicit his help; to use all means and advantages, with an entire dependence on his Divine blessing to make them effectual; and to give glory and honour to the Spirit for all the increase of knowledge and grace which we receive. It is not enough that our object be good; but our manner of obtaining that object must be good also. All sects and all religions agree in proposing a good end; namely that of a virtuous life; but there is a wide difference in the means used to attain it. The religion of a Christian is a religion in which the sufferings of Christ and the work of the Spirit make a principal part; and he mistakes, in the most important points of it, who thinks it sufficient to attend to the precepts of the Gospel without having respect to the peculiar means which it prescribes. The honour of the Spirit of God, and the glory of the Son in their respective offices of Sanctifier and Redeemer, are perhaps full as properly the objects of the Christian scheme of salvation as the happiness of man. And it is, I fear, the great error of the present day that a religion is proposed, in which the Son and the Spirit have no place: it is the melioration of heathen morality, by a mixture of the purity of the Gospel without that spirituality which is the very essence of the Christian religion.

3. To walk in the Spirit implies also, that we *use the means by which* the Spirit has promised to convey

his influence, in the humble hope of thus receiving it. —The influence of the Spirit is not promised, except in the use of appointed means. “I will be inquired of by the house of Israel for these things, saith the Lord,” when he promised the Spirit. “Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find.” “For what man is there among you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” —To expect the help of the Spirit without the use of the means is enthusiasm and unwarranted presumption. I know not how it comes to be taken for granted by some, that the diligent use of means and dependence upon the Spirit are incompatible with each other. They seem to be afraid of rating too highly the means and ordinances; as if the Spirit of God were honoured in proportion as we undervalued the ordinances. On the contrary, it appears to me, that a man cannot so effectually depend upon the Spirit as by diligently using all the means. Dependence on the Spirit and the use of means are not opposed to each other: they are closely allied. By the means the Spirit works. They are but his instruments, by which he is pleased to communicate his influences to us. We honour the Spirit not by neglecting his appointed ordinances, but by sedulously using them. He, therefore, who walks in the Spirit will conscientiously and reverently attend to all the prescribed ordinances. He will pray much in the Spirit. In prayer, the Spirit operates on the soul: he helps our infirmities, instils good desires into our hearts, and makes intercession for us with fervent aspirations. He will *read the word*, written by the inspiration of the Spirit; and expect that, by means of that word, his mind will be illuminated. He will *attend the preaching of the Gospel*, knowing that the influence of the Spirit is conveyed through the ministry of preaching. He will *receive that holy sacrament* which was especially designed as a means of confirming our faith in Christ cruci-

fied, and communicating the aid of the Holy Spirit. In short, he will shew his reverence for the Spirit, and express the desire he has of obtaining his special influences, by a devout and uniform use of all those means by which the Spirit has been pleased to grant his Divine assistance to the soul.

4. I observe, further, that to *walk in the Spirit* implies the exercise of a holy fear of him, which will manifest itself by avoiding those things which would grieve him, and by complying with his holy motions.—There is such a thing as resisting the Spirit, as grieving the Spirit, as quenching the Spirit, against which we are warned in Scripture. This we do, when we sin wilfully and presumptuously; when we give way to sins of impurity, which are particularly contrary to his pure and holy nature,—or to the suggestions of infidelity, by which, the Israelites in the wilderness are said to have vexed and grieved him. Now he who walks in the Spirit will maintain a holy fear and jealousy of himself, lest he should offend his illustrious Visitor. Though he will be careful to distinguish between the imaginations of his own fancy and the suggestions of the Spirit, yet he will carefully attend to those intimations which are fully in unison with the revealed will of God, and which strongly enforce it; and, impressed with a reverence of his authority, will be afraid of acting against his will.

5. And, lastly, to walk in the Spirit, implies *the cultivation of that heavenly-mindedness* which the Spirit particularly inspires.—A worldly, covetous, or vain frame of mind is as destructive of the Spirit's influence as acts of gross sin. "They that be after the Spirit," saith the Apostle, "do mind the things of the Spirit." The object of the Spirit is to impress the soul with a view of the vanity of the things of time and sense and of the importance of those which are spiritual. He communicates no ideas relating to science, or to gain, or to worldly pleasure or enjoyment; he resides not in the heart which is engrossed by these. His object is

to communicate heavenly things; to implant the fear and love of God; to instil faith in the Saviour; to elevate the soul to a hope and foretaste of the joys above; to encourage holy affections, and to implant the mind which was in Christ. If we walk in the Spirit, therefore, it will be our endeavour to repress that worldliness of heart, that appetite after sensual pleasure, that craving anxiety for earthly objects, which is natural to the carnal heart. "To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." The carnal mind is put in opposition to the spiritual mind. Spiritual life consists in mortifying, through the Spirit, the deeds of the body.

A particular temptation is often most successfully overcome, not so much by directly opposing it, and reasoning against it, as by encouraging a contrary disposition of mind. When the object of temptation is present, the view of it too often only inflames our passions, and gives vigour to the temptation. Here we must flee from it rather than resist it. But, in the absence of temptation, there is an opportunity of overcoming it effectually, by cultivating a spirit incompatible with it; a spirit of purity, heavenly-mindedness, humility, and divine love. This is to alter the nature of the soil which encouraged the growth of weeds. This is also to guard not against that particular temptation only, but to fortify the mind against sin in general. For where the mind is much occupied about divine things and acquires a taste for holy pursuits, the tempter will meet with little encouragement. It is the soul that has first abandoned itself to covetousness, carelessness, sloth, or sensuality, which falls an easy prey to his assaults.

If then we would walk in the Spirit, we must cultivate spiritual views, and act from spiritual motives. We must honour him by exercising an habitual dependence upon his help; we must pay a conscientious reverence to the means and ordinances which he has appointed; we must be cautious lest we grieve him, or

resist his holy motions; and, finally, we must cultivate that heavenly-mindedness and those holy affections which he communicates to the soul.

II. If we thus walk in the Spirit, we shall *not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*. This is the second point which I proposed to illustrate.

There is a certain degree to which victory over the sinful desires of the flesh is obtained by every real Christian; and this degree is, perhaps, proportioned to that in which he walks in the Spirit. The flesh, indeed, lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; so that in this imperfect state, while the flesh still remains, there is a constant conflict between them. But though, on this account, the Christian is not able to do entirely the things which he would, yet on the other hand, neither is the flesh, or the corrupt nature, able to act according to its will: and it is added, for our encouragement, that if we walk in the Spirit, we are not under the law; therefore, neither shall sin gain the ascendancy over us, nor shall we finally fall under the condemnation of the law.

The man who walks not in the Spirit is a willing servant of sin: he either opposes not the lusts of the flesh, or he does it feebly and partially, and from imperfect or corrupt motives. He lives under the power and dominion of sin.—On the contrary, the man who is renewed by the Spirit, though he still feels the power of sin, yet resists and struggles against it generally and habitually. His prevailing wish is to be free from all sin. He is using measures to obtain the victory over it; and, when foiled, he is dejected and miserable. He does not, as he once did, make his sin his pleasure; but it is his burden and pain.

A material difference will therefore be visible between one who is in the flesh and one who is in the Spirit, in the manner in which they will receive this advice of the Apostle. He who is in the flesh will take no pains to understand it, nor will he labour to follow it: he is easy and contented: you tell him of a

remedy for a disease which he does not feel, and point him out a good which he does not wish to obtain.

On the contrary, he who is born of the Spirit, being accustomed to consider the corrupt desires of the flesh as his greatest enemies, will be glad to hear and to follow the advice by which he may be delivered from them. With anxiety, therefore, he will consider what it is to walk in the Spirit. Where he does not understand, he will reflect and meditate. Where the advice appears just and reasonable, he will not delay to follow it. When it succeeds, he will be elevated with hope; when it fails, he will be dejected, yet will still endeavour more fully and more diligently to walk in the Spirit. Thus the honour of the Spirit will be promoted by him, and the work of the Spirit will be carried on in his heart.

Permit me to conclude with a short application of the whole.

How important is the subject of the influence of the Spirit of God on the soul of man! But will God in very deed dwell with man! we may well exclaim. Yes; his influence is promised as the peculiar gift of God to all who believe in the name of Christ. What attention, then, do we pay to him? What is his influence on our hearts? Does he abide in us? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Are we then walking after the Spirit? Are there visible in us the marks of the Spirit's agency? Could he dwell in us, and our hearts be, nevertheless, covetous, worldly, sensual, impure? If he does dwell in us shall it not be evidenced by effects suitable to his character and office? Shall we not produce the fruits of the Spirit? Shall we not walk after the Spirit? Will not the Spirit be lusting against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the Spirit? Shall we not perceive the effect of his work in all goodness, righteousness, and truth? Shall we not enjoy a spirit of holy liberty in the service of God; draw nigh to God in the spirit of adoption; delight in the law of God; rejoice in believing with a hope full of consolations.

tion. The presence of the Spirit of God must doubtless manifest itself by the purity, and righteousness, and holy affections which are imparted by it. What then do we know of the work of the Spirit? What tokens do we possess of his spiritual aid? Thus are we called upon by the Apostle to prove ourselves: "Examine," saith he, "whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, (that is, by his Spirit,) except ye be reprobates?"—except your profession of Christianity be only an empty form. God grant that we may have a witness in ourselves that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son; and a well-founded hope that we have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.

To conclude: Are we labouring not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh? Is it our chief desire to mortify our corrupt nature? This is indeed the characteristic property of every real Christian. He cannot be a true disciple of Christ unless he is supremely influenced by such a wish. Then let us attend to the direction of the Apostle: "Walk in the Spirit." Consider in what manner the Spirit is pleased to impart his sacred influences. There is a line of conduct which he requires us to pursue in order to be partakers of them. The connexion between a spiritual walk and victory over sin is indissoluble. It is vain to expect the one without the other. Let us see, then, that we are spiritually-minded; that we are following the rules which the Spirit has laid down for the edification of the church. Let us beware of grieving the Spirit by forsaking the path he has pointed out to us; by seeking to obtain dominion over sin by motives merely human or worldly, by neglecting to seek his aid, by slighting his ordinances, by giving way to wilful sin, or by encouraging a worldly and sensual spirit. Vain is the hope of that man who expects the influence of the Spirit to operate upon him,

while he takes no pains himself, exercises no self-denial, watches not against transgression. Vain is the hope of those who, because they coldly pray for the influence of the Spirit, think there is no necessity to do more, and are easy and at rest, though they experience no victory over sin: as if the fault no longer rested with them but with God, who does not please to communicate his aid. God does not offer the Spirit to encourage and foster the sloth of man, but to quicken his diligence. Walk, then, in the Spirit; let your whole conduct and conversation be ordered according to the holy directions of the Spirit of God in his revealed word. Thus you will obtain the victory over sin. Thus you will overcome in the good fight of faith, and receive the palm of triumph.

SERMON XVII.

REGARD TO GOD, THE GREAT PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN.

Gen. xxxix. 9.

How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

IT is of the utmost importance that we should possess right principles of action; both because the quality of an action is to be determined, chiefly, by the principle from which it flows, and because a man's conduct is so influenced and directed by his principles, that the whole quantity of good or evil which he does may be chiefly attributed to these.

The power of bad principles to produce bad actions is evident; but it is not always perceived that they sometimes give birth to actions which appear to be good, and which would be really so, if the principle from which they flowed were not corrupt. Yet this is very frequently the case: and much of the virtue, therefore, which passes current in the world, at least much of the abstinence from vice which is seen in it, will be

found deficient in real worth, on account of its not having proceeded from right principles.

1. One false principle on which some men abstain from sins, and practise some duties, is that of *commutation*. Against the sensual indulgences, for example, which they will not renounce, they set off a liberality which they take pride perhaps in indulging; and while they feed the hungry, and clothe the naked, and bid the widow's heart rejoice, think their vice of no weight in the balance, and claim the full benefit of that declaration of our Lord: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—Others rest it on their integrity to redeem their failings; and because they are true to their word, and faithful in their engagements, assume that profaneness, for instance, or pride, are venial faults, which may be endured in such characters, and which God himself will overlook, in consideration of the virtue: "for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and a just weight is his delight."—A third class, if possible worse than these, are they who would compound for their sins, by exercises of devotion: who, while they live in injustice, in deceit, in malice, or covetousness, yet confide in all the promises to the godly, with only this symptom of godliness, that they make many prayers.

Now, in all such cases, the duty which is practised serves only as a cover to sin, and as a preventive to that salutary remorse of conscience which else might restrain their corruptions.

2. A second false principle, by which men are kept from certain acts of sin, is the *propensity to sins of an opposite nature*.—Thus avarice will be a check not only on profusion, but on all the vices which may lead to it. Lewdness, or drunkenness, or ambition, for instance, may be stigmatized, may be avoided, may even be really disliked; not out of any regard to true virtue, but for the mere expense which they may occasion.—A spirit of prodigality, on the other hand, will, for the same reason, and on principles just as corrupt, inveigh against avarice, paint in lively colours the effects of a

close and covetous disposition, and view every thing that appears sordid or mean with abhorrence. In neither case is it the hatred of sin, or the love of holiness, which restrains from evil, or dictates a practice partially right, but it is the prevalence of one vice over another at variance with it; it is, in fact, the very love of sin which is the foundation of a seemingly-virtuous conduct.

3. *Fear of censure* from the world is another principle of this nature.—There are some sins so destructive to the peace of society, and in themselves so abominable, that they are held generally scandalous among mankind. The dread, therefore, of incurring the loss of reputation will act as a check upon these sins; and the more so, as it is a loss which often involves other losses, and is attended with inconveniences or vexations. And though this regard to character is sometimes of excellent use in the conduct of life, yet to make it the sole or leading motive, to abstain from what is sinful on this ground alone, can scarcely be denominated virtue. The fear of man, upon which it is founded, may be a most corrupt principle. It is often in direct opposition to the fear of God; and is found by those, who are truly desirous of serving him, to be that very principle which they have ever most cause to watch against and resist.

4. If to the fear of censure, we add the *love of applause*, which is almost always associated with it, we shall find the root of what is commonly called the sense of honour,—a principle among the most powerful which influence the human breast,—obtaining chiefly in generous minds, and serviceable, without doubt, in restraining from some vices; but which, nevertheless, is radically defective, and even, in a high degree, corrupt. Trace it to its origin and we find it arising from a fear of the censure and a desire of the approbation of the world. A man values himself on his contempt for certain vices which he thinks opprobrious or base, and upon his adherence to a certain line

of conduct which he deems worthy and honourable. If you ask *why* he thus contemns the vice, and admires the virtue,—it is not because the one is wrong and the other right, according to the pure and holy law of God;—it is not that there is any assignable moral turpitude in what he hates, more than in many other things which he freely allows; nor that there is any real excellence in what he approves, more than in many things for which he has no such esteem; but merely, because there is a class of persons in the world, with whom he would wish to be thought connected, who both maintain these sentiments themselves, and exclude and censure all who do not maintain them. On this account, he comes to think on such points as they think; to value himself on all that gives him the distinction he desires; and to reject what would deprive him of it, as bringing a stain upon his reputation. Thus his pride and his vanity will become strong guards against all crimes which are dishonourable.—Yet what is this (if we examine the point on any sound and solid principles) but corruption engaged against corruption, and vice at war with vice? Or what aversion to sin, *as sin*, can result from it? Let those who would prefer death to a dishonourable crime be tried where no such disgrace attaches: and this sense of honour may be found to encourage evil, in some cases, quite as much as it prevents it in others. It instigates to revenge; it authorises duelling; it is directly contrary to the spirit of Christianity, which inculcates meekness, forbearance, humility, poverty of spirit. It will excuse fornication, drunkenness, prodigality, profaneness, neglect of public and private worship, and want of charity to the poor. The principle which allows and sanctions so much corruption, is entitled to little credit, even when, by accident, it restrains from the commission of evil.

5. The *dread of consequences* is another principle which may prevent the commission of sin, but which cannot be looked upon as a principle that sanctifies

the conduct.—It is so ordered in the constitution of the world that vice, especially of some kinds, is followed by great inconvenience. Intoxication, for instance, stupefies the faculties, injures the constitution, unfits for business, entails misery upon a family, and produces want and disgrace. A person seeing these effects, perhaps beginning to feel them, may be thus induced to deny himself, and to restrain a practice, which he has reason to fear will be injurious to him. Yet what is this but the dictate of self-love? What is it but that common regard to self-preservation, that natural instinct, which may be exceedingly strong where there is not the least regard to God and his religion? Shall we call such a conduct virtuous? It may be styled prudent; it may be allowed the merit of being better than a contrary practice; but it surely, in no respect, deserves the name of virtue, unless it be made a part of virtue to defend our bodies from harm, or to avoid taking poison which we know would produce both pain and death.

6. A sixth imperfect principle, by which many are led to abstain from gross acts of sin, is the *dread of a guilty conscience*.—They have been accustomed to suffer much uneasiness from the secret sting of conscience, when they have done what is grossly wrong. They remember how bitter their feelings were; how much they endured from a mind so preying upon itself, what painful apprehensions of Divine vengeance tormented them, what uneasy sensations and fears disturbed their rest. They compare this with the peace of mind which innocence produces; and, balancing the one with the other, determine that it is expedient to deny themselves a present gratification, rather than lose their peace of mind and expose themselves to misery. Yet what is this but mere prudence, appearing under a more specious form? How little does it amount to beyond a dislike of the effects which follow sin; while the love of it may still remain rooted in the heart.

I do not deny that all these imperfect principles may be of some use in the world. They certainly are so;—for to these must be attributed, in very great part, the degree of justice, of temperance, sobriety, and moderation which is still remaining among men. Neither would I advise that these should be renounced, because they are erroneous and faulty, unless better were implanted in their room: but this I must say, that these are not holy principles; they have nothing to do with true religion; the practice founded on them is imperfect; and there is a necessity that other principles, purer and more competent, should be acquired. Reflect a little more particularly how very imperfect they are. They produce, at best, but a *partial* practice. They extend only to the prevention of certain sins, while others are permitted. Such as are gross, such as are scandalous, such as are injurious to fortune, health, or peace, they will restrain;—but those which the world tolerates—the workings of pride, of self-love, and of vanity, they leave wholly untouched. It is chiefly the *external act* which they prohibit. The disposition, which is, doubtless, the main point, they do not alter. A person, influenced by these principles only, may indulge, to any extent, an unchaste or vindictive disposition, though considerations of convenience or prudence may restrain him from open acts of sin. It is a *spurious kind* of goodness which they inculcate. They implant no right disposition; they often allow a bad one to remain; though they restrain the excesses of it: they produce no real preference of holiness; no real delight in the will of God, no real hatred of sin. They do not tend to form a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us. And, moreover, they have no *respect to God*. They may all subsist without reverence of his name: without any serious worship of him; without faith; without love to Christ; without any truly Christian motive. They are to be considered rather as of a civil, than a religious, nature. The end they propose is

selfish. The means they use, and the motives they inculcate, are of a worldly kind; implying no sort of regard to God's honour, or to the accomplishment of his purposes in the creation of man.

It is evident, therefore, that some better principle must be sought;—some principle of a purer nature, and more adequate power. It must be *universal*, extending to the prevention of sins of every kind; inculcating the practice of virtues of all kinds; not compensating for the want of one by the practice of another; not being scrupulous in the duties we owe to man, while it allows the neglect of what is due to God. It must be *uniform*, not fluctuating with times and seasons; not cultivating virtues which are fashionable or gainful, and being ashamed of such as leave us in poverty or disgrace; but steadily persisting in the right practice, whether met by the frowns or the smiles of man. It must be *pure*, not following the precepts of religion, for the sake of the advantages attending it, or declining sin on account of the miseries which follow it; but cultivating goodness for its own sake. It must *sanctify the disposition*; not only enforcing a right conduct, but disposing the *heart* to follow it; implanting not only a sense of the necessity of religion, but a love of it, a real esteem for its precepts, a conviction of their intrinsic excellence, and an unfeigned attachment to them. Such must be the principle engrafted in the heart, that men may bring forth fruit to God. And till there be such a principle, however others may restrain from sin, they will produce only an imperfect degree of virtue, leaving the heart corrupt even where the conduct is reformed; and producing what may perhaps satisfy imperfect man, but can never please the holy God.

How excellent was the principle by which Joseph was actuated! He was in the flower of his age, the season when the passions are most impetuous. His mistress was the tempter: whose favour or displeasure might advance or ruin his interests. She solicited him day by day. He had the prospect not only of secrecy, but

of advancement, if he complied: while a refusal might be attended with the highest danger. Yet against all this accumulated force of temptation did Joseph stand firm! By the power of what principle? The fear of God was before his eyes. He could not do that wickedness and *sin against God*.

This fear of God, which Joseph possessed, is not to be considered as a mere dread of his punishment of sin hereafter. For this, like the dread of its evil consequences in the present life, may have nothing in it really virtuous: may be only a modification of self-love; and may consist with the love of sin, and a secret wish that it were possible to indulge it.—But the true fear of God which Joseph discovered, and which alone possesses the qualities which we have enumerated, as necessary to a real principle of holiness is a *filial* fear: the fear which a son feels of a father whom he at once reveres and loves. It is a compound of reverence and affection. Indeed, the sentiments of a dutiful child towards a dear and venerable parent, may afford the liveliest example of a genuine principle of holiness. Such a son will feel a reluctance to disobey or grieve his parent. He will see the propriety of consulting his pleasure: nay, more; he will feel a strong inclination to consult it. He will not obey him from any mere motive of interest, nor yet from a mere dread of his displeasure: he will not obey in those things only which coincide with his own inclination, while he refuses what would cost him any effort of self-denial; he will not shew reverence in external acts, or in his father's presence only, but there will be in him a steady prevailing principle of regard, which will make his heart and his life in unison with each other, which will incline him to his duty with an irresistible force. His inclination will prompt him at once, to obedience; nor will he need to urge himself to its performance by the consideration of any advantages to be derived from it.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is intended, my brethren, to produce the genuine principle of obedience to God in our hearts. It implants, whenever it is duly received, at once a reverence for God and a love to him, and thus causes us to abstain from sin; not merely in consideration of the particular or general evils of it; but by giving us views of it as an injury done to God, as the thing which grieves him, as an act of rebellion against his authority, and an insult to his power. This evidently applies as a universal principle, to sin of every kind; to secret as well as open sins; to sins of omission as well as commission; to the disposition and the desires, as well as to outward acts; to those that are esteemed of little consequence by the world, as well as those which they reckon scandalous.—By the introduction of such a principle, the foundation of corruption will be cleansed. The bitter waters will be made sweet, a clean heart will be given, and a right spirit renewed within us.

It is evident that the degree of obedience thus produced will depend upon the degree of reverence and love to God which prevail in the heart: and, as these will never be perfect in this imperfect state, the obedience itself will be imperfect also. But it will still be sincere. It will proceed from the heart; and, in this respect, will differ from that produced by any of the false principles which I have exposed in this discourse. The same thing happens in the obedience of a son towards a parent whom he esteems and loves. Through the frailty of human nature, and the imperfection of our best qualities, he may at times be dilatory in performing acts of filial duty; at times he may be too much occupied with his own concerns; sometimes, in smaller matters, he may even act contrary to the will of his father: yet still there is a reality in his love; there is a sincerity in his obedience; there is a principle totally different from that of an hireling servant, who consults nothing but his interest in obeying his

master, and from mercenary motives alone is attentive not to displease him.

These dispositions of reverence and love to God the Gospel produces, by impressing the understanding through His word, and the heart through the influence of the Holy Spirit, with suitable convictions of the majesty and goodness of God.

1. Convictions of the *majesty* of God.—The Scriptures set him before us; and whenever we are inclined to receive and profit by the declarations of Scripture, they are treasured up in the heart and make a deep and strong impression there. The Scriptures, I say, set God before us, full of glory and greatness; as every where present; as knowing all things, and doing all things; as infinitely wise; as the author of all good; as perfectly just and supremely holy. Impressed by such representations, the Christian fears before him with deep awe and holy reverence. “Who shall not fear thee,” he exclaims, “thou King of saints? Worthy art thou of being feared and obeyed. In thy presence only is fulness of joy. Thy smile is happiness. Thy frown is death.”

2. But this reverence is mixed with love, by the impressions there given of the *goodness* of God.—The gift of his only begotten Son, his readiness to pardon, the greatness of his patience and forbearance, the care of his providence, the proofs of his love both here and in another state;—all these represent God as the Father, as well as the Judge, of his people; infinitely amiable as well as “greatly to be feared.” Drawn by such representations, the penitent approaches to the Throne of Grace; pleads the promises, anticipates the mercy of God; ventures to trust in him; feels increasing confidence in proportion to increasing knowledge; adores the infinite grace of his heavenly Father; believes, loves, and with enlarging views of the goodness of God in redemption, increasing faith and devotion, his love to him and his reverence for him increase also;—that is, he obtains juster views of God’s attributes, and

these produce stronger sensations of love towards him, which will of course lead to increased endeavours to please, and a greater fear to offend his heavenly Father. How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God! This readily suggests itself now, as an answer to temptation, where formerly nothing was considered but the temporal inconveniences which would follow a compliance with it.

But the great duty in which this knowledge of God, and this just disposition towards him, are obtained, is that application to him for pardon through Jesus Christ which is prescribed in the Gospel.—Man naturally neither knows nor fears God; and he too often remains, for a considerable period, if not the whole of his life, without any proper acquaintance with him, or care about him. The world and the objects of sense, in general, engross his attention. He seeks for happiness in these, and he is for a time satisfied with them. He takes his measure of sin from the standard prevalent in the world,—is satisfied with his own conduct, and does not conceive that God can be materially displeased with it. And in this state, if left to himself, he would go on to the day of his death, without ever thinking seriously about God, or truly endeavouring to obtain his favour. But God, who is rich in mercy, often interposes to prevent us from continuing in this state of ignorance and sin. He disappoints us in our worldly expectations, and thus practically convinces us, that the world is a less valuable portion than we imagined. He impresses our minds with some religious subject. He turns our attention by some awakening providence, or some strong conviction of sin, to the state of our own souls. He shews us that we are not so blameless as we thought ourselves to be; and puts us upon endeavouring to serve God in a better manner. When a man is thus far awakened, and is honest and faithful to his conscience, he will never rest here. He will see the infinite importance of the subject which now engages his attention, and his sense of

that importance will cause him to devote to it much of his time and his reflections. He will read the Scripture therefore; become earnest in prayer; examine himself closely; correct his conduct; amend his whole life; and labour, by all the means in his power, to become devoted to God. And now it is, that, for the first time, he will be properly sensible of the depth of corruption which is in his heart. His first religious views will be, thus, of a painful kind. They will not immediately give him peace and hope in God. They may distress and harass his soul. He may have lost the quiet which he before enjoyed, and, for a season, obtain no other in its room. But let him not be discouraged: he is in the way of obtaining solid peace, and a hope which maketh not ashamed. Let him persevere in reading the word of God. In prayer, and in attendance upon the holy ordinances of God; and soon the glorious plan of God's mercy, in saving sinners by faith in Christ Jesus, will discover itself to him, and he will behold such a rich display of grace in Christ, that he will be, at once, humbled and amazed, filled with love and with praise on account of it. He will see that God "can be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." He will have such discoveries as will embolden him to rely upon Christ, with a confidence which nothing can shake; with a love which nothing can damp. And now he obtains the true principle of virtue;—the filial love and fear of God. Now the foundation is firmly laid of future obedience to him for the remainder of his days. He has now learnt, by experience, the goodness of God, and serves him henceforward in newness of life, rejoicing in his heavenly Father, and devoting himself to him with the most perfect regard.

To conclude with an application of this subject—

1. Let it put us upon examining by what principle we are influenced. To resolve this question, let us inquire, of what kind is our obedience? Is it principally outward before men? Is it partial and defective? Is

it uncertain and fluctuating; depending upon times and seasons, upon companions and opportunities? If so, it is to be feared that the principle from which it springs is not pure. The true principle of obedience powerfully urges to obedience, and, without it, an unsteady conduct will prove continually that the heart is not right with God.

2. Let us learn from this subject the necessity of *being reconciled to God*, in order to possess a right *principle of obedience*.

By nature man is alienated from God, his service, and his pure and holy law. Till this enmity, which prevails in the heart, is removed, there can be no true principle of holiness. To remove this, contemplate the love of God in Christ; hear how God invites you to return to him;—"God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their tresspasses unto them, and hath committed unto us (ministers) the word of reconciliation. Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." These few words contain the whole of what is necessary to produce a change of heart. God is willing to be reconciled to thee, O sinner! He invites thee to be reconciled to him. He has removed every obstacle in the way. He has made his only-begotten Son, who knew no sin, to be a sin offering for you, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him. Let this love of God produce its due effect on your heart. Reject not God's gracious offer. Surrender yourself to him. "Return to God, for he will abundantly pardon." Study his character, and you will find it to be full of goodness and mercy. To know God is to love him, and to love him, is to obey him.

3. And ye who do live, in a measure, under the influence of the fear of God, seek to cultivate it. Cultivate it by acquainting yourselves, yet further, with

the Gospel of Christ: in which is contained every thing to soften the hard, and to cleanse the polluted, heart. Set God always before you, for he is ever present with you. Accustom yourself to look upon him as your Benefactor, your Deliverer, your Friend, your Father. Be afraid of losing his favour. In his favour is life. There is no wretchedness to be compared with that of him who lives without God. Habituate your mind to pure motives. Think not merely of the inconveniences of sin, but consider sin as the greatest evil, because it separates you from God. Act from this principle: and accustom yourself to reason always as Joseph here did; "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!"

SERMON XVIII.

THE WORK OF CHRIST.

Luke. iv. 18, 19.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty, them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

THESE, I need scarcely say, are the words of the prophet Isaiah, spoken by him in the spirit of prophecy, concerning the office of the Messiah, and here claimed by Christ as relating to himself, and descriptive of his own work. When he was at Nazareth, perhaps for the first time after he had entered on his mission, he went, as he had done in other cities, into the synagogue; and the fame of his preaching and miracles having gone before him, the minister out of respect or curiosity, or following the common practice on such occasions, invited him to read and give his exhortation to the people. “And there was delivered unto

him the book of the Prophet Isaias; and when he had opened the book, he found" (in the sixty first chapter, which was probably the lesson of the day,) "the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down," according to the custom among the Jews in teaching; whereas, in reading the Scripture, they stood, by way of distinction and reverence. "And the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." How he continued this discourse we are not informed: but the purport of it is evident from the opening. It shewed the office in which he himself was engaged, to be the very same with that which the prophet had described; and it explained the gracious nature of that office, for we are told that the hearers "bare him witness," (assenting probably to the justice of his claim as the Messiah,) and "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth," at the beneficent nature of the mission which was represented as his own.

The whole of our Lord's address on this occasion would, doubtless, have been invaluable. But though we are not gratified with this discourse, yet, from his other sermons upon record, from the general object of his mission, and from the discourses and writings of his inspired Apostles, we may collect, at least in substance, what he would probably say, concerning *the persons here described and the gracious office of their Redeemer.*

I. Our first inquiry, then, shall be respecting the character or circumstances, of the persons described in my text.

It seems clear that this whole passage is metaphorical; for allowing that a literal sense may be applied to parts of it with propriety, yet there are other parts which will not bear that sense. He did, indeed, preach the Gospel to those who were literally the poor of the world; and gave sight to those who were naturally blind; yet he did *not* literally open the doors of prisons, to give deliverance to captives; nor did he literally demand the year of jubilee for his nation, at which the prophet announced whom he spoke of "the acceptable year of the Lord."

Assuming, therefore a metaphorical signification of the words, we must consider what kind of figurative bondage, or blindness, or poverty, corresponds best with those various offices of mercy, for which Messiah came: and we shall be at no loss to discover this, when we reflect that he came to be a Saviour from sin; and that the state of sinners is frequently illustrated in Scripture by the very image which the prophet here employs.

I would observe, however, that the various illustrations here used appear not to represent different states or characters, but to give different views of the same moral condition. He who, with reference to the power of his sin, is called a captive, may, with respect to the ignorance and darkness of mind which his sin produces, be considered as one deprived of sight.—These images serve only to present, under different aspects, the sad state of those whom Christ came to deliver, and the blessed effects of that deliverance. With regard to these persons, they seem to describe two things: their *actual condition*, and the *sense* which they themselves entertain of it.

1. Their *actual condition* is represented as very deplorable: for what image can express greater misery than that of captives treated with the barbarous rigour of those times; immured in dungeons; loaded with fetters; bruised with stripes; perhaps like Zedekiah, the unfortunate king of Judah, deprived of sight as well

as liberty. Yet this is a very just image of every man's condition, who is under the power of sin. He is a slave to the most cruel tyrant; a prisoner under the most awful condemnation; a captive, tied and bound with the chain of his sins. To drop the metaphor—he is one exposed to the wrath of an offended God; continually increasing the load of his guilt; the sport of various evil passions, which possess and harass his degraded mind; having his understanding depraved by sin; the dupe of Satan's artifice, and the victim of his power and malice; such, in short, that if he repent not, the vengeance of heaven must overtake, and consign him to eternal punishment.

2. Yet it is possible that there may be this state of sin, comprehending all these awful circumstances of misery and danger, without any concern about it, or even any distinct perception of it. A poor captive indeed, confined in prison, cannot well be insensible to the misery of his condition, nor wholly unconcerned for his deliverance; but a sinner, whose state is justly compared to his, may be destitute of all such feelings: and this is, in fact, the case with the generality of sinners. They are unconcerned about their sins. They are not afraid of God's judgments. They see little or nothing to be lamented in their condition. They are not only "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," but morally dead withal: quite insensible to the misery of such a state.

This, however, is by no means the case with the persons here represented. Images are used with respect to them, which describe their mind as deeply touched with the sense of their unhappiness. They are not only captives, but they are broken-hearted in their bondage. The good news of redemption is to be preached to them; which would be no glad tidings to those who felt not the weight of their chains: the year of jubilee is to be proclaimed, when all the oppressed were set free: which would be most acceptable to those who were most sensible of their calamity.

And this description of the persons who shall be benefited by the salvation of Christ is perfectly just, and corresponds strictly with the whole tenor of Scripture on the subject. They are represented in Scripture as being sensible of the misery of a sinful state, and desirous to be freed from it. They are "the sick," who "need a physician;" they are "the thirsty," who are invited to "drink of the water of life;" "the weary," who shall enjoy their Saviour's "rest." It is the *longing* soul which shall be satisfied, and the *hungry* soul which shall be filled with goodness. "When the poor and needy *seek* water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for *thirst*, then the Lord will hear them, and open rivers to them in high places." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," (it is written,) "for they shall be filled." "Whosoever asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." "He that cometh unto me," saith Christ, "I will in no wise cast out;" and if any are excluded, it is because "they will not come" to him, "that they may have life."

All such expressions denote the true Christian temper, that which our Lord inculcated under the names of humility and poverty of spirit; and which both Christ and his Apostles meant by the more significant word "repentance." It includes a consciousness of demerit; a due sense of the evil of sin, of compunction for its offence, and of shame for its defilement; a sincere detestation of it, and anxiety to be delivered, both from its guilt and from its power. This is the disposition supposed in my text, and also explicitly required in the New Testament, as a necessary preparative for faith in Christ, and for an interest in his salvation.

This frame of mind may comprehend different degrees, or even kinds, of uneasiness on account of sin. The metaphors which are here used, illustrate these. It is one kind of distress to feel the pressure of poverty; it is another to endure the yoke of bondage; and a third, to lose the organ of sight. So, various circum-

stances produce various forms and shades of (I may so call them) of that penitence and humiliation for sin which are here required. The degree, or the complexion, of that sorrow which men feel for sin—their sense of unworthiness and painful apprehension on account of it—does not depend altogether upon the number and enormity of their transgressions, but sometimes upon the nature of those transgressions. Some are more debasing, and cause more sorrow; some others are more criminal, and excite greater terror; others, again, *disqualify* for virtue or holiness, and produce more of depression. It depends, often upon greater or less sensibility of conscience; upon higher or lower measures of knowledge; upon tempers more or less ingenuous; upon admonitions more or less impressive; upon warmer or fainter love of God; upon an almost endless variety of accidents or peculiarities, which will always diversify the feeling in different minds. What concerns us most, therefore, is the reality of the disposition. To constitute us real disciples of the Saviour, our repentance must be “true,” our humility genuine, our desire of holiness “unfeigned.” They must be such as the metaphors in the text will fitly and fairly illustrate.

The sum, then, of what we learn from this and every other passage of Scripture, concerning the proper character of the objects of Christ’s salvation is, that humiliation, repentance, and desire of righteousness form the principal features of it. I put them together because they are united in fact. We may view them separately, if we please; but as they exist, they are one and the same disposition. He who is truly humble must feel the evil of sin, and consequently desire holiness. He who repents must of course be humbled for transgression, and must hunger and thirst after righteousness. Viewing it, then as one disposition, let us consider that to which it is opposed. And what is this but carelessness about transgression; insensibility to guilt; “hardness of heart,” as the Scriptures call it? This excludes

from every benefit which the redemption of Christ can confer, for if repentance and faith be necessary, then the disposition in which they can have no place must disqualify for salvation. Let those, then, who have hitherto been careless about their sin—who have never felt them a burden or a defilement: who have been satisfied with their condition, and have not even wished for one more perfect; O let them seriously consider that, in this state of mind, they are not even objects of the salvation of Christ! Let them put the question to their own consciences. Can I hope that God has sent his Son to save the careless and impenitent? Did the Redeemer ever *intimate* that such characters were the objects of his favour? Can I, for a moment, suppose that he prayed and agonized for such as should refuse to pray for themselves; or bore the heavy punishment of sin, that they might continue to indulge in it, or led his pure and holy life, that they might spend theirs in thoughtlessness and folly? Is it unreasonable, if God requires a disposition prepared for mercy before he shews mercy? Is it not just that the moral Governor of the world should demand a suitable acknowledgment of transgression, a proper sorrow for our offence, and that change of heart and conduct without which such acknowledgments are vain? Surely it cannot be imagined that men's carelessness about Divine things is any excuse for their neglect of them? It is rather an aggravation of their sin: for it arises from want of reverence for God, and of regard to his commandments, which is in itself a most criminal disposition. It cannot be supposed that a fair character and mere estimation with our fellow-creatures will be enough to satisfy the holy God, or will be all that he requires? If so, what need of the incarnation of the son of God; of his cross and passion; of the whole dispensation of the Gospel; or of any such thing as holiness?

But give me leave, in a point of so much consequence, to address myself immediately to yourselves. Amongst those who hear me, are doubtless many young

persons, gay and thoughtless; many of a more advanced age, immersed in worldly cares, who yet agree in this point, that they have little real concern about the state of their souls, little uneasiness about their sins, or desire to lead a truly religious life. You all hope to be saved; but I entreat you to consider seriously what kind of persons are the objects of salvation. Will all of all descriptions and dispositions be saved? If not, there must be some discrimination of character, with the nature of which you ought to be acquainted. Search, then, the Scriptures, that you may be able to draw this line for yourselves. See there whether Christianity does not require a state of mind with respect to religion, the very reverse of what you possess. If you can find that Christ has given a warrant to his disciples for negligence, dissipation, and sin, then use the liberty which he has given you: but if he came to save those only who repent, whose hearts are contrite, who hunger and thirst after righteousness; then, I beseech you, rest not satisfied with your state till you know that you possess that character which will stamp you for a real Christian.

II. Blessed be God, however, there are some who know their unworthiness, and are humbled on account of it. These are the persons intended in my text, and such will gladly hear the second point we were to consider; namely, the gracious office which the Redeemer sustains to save them.

This office is here delineated under several views. Is the state of sinners described as a state of great suffering? Christ brings them deliverance. As a state of bondage? He grants them liberty. Under the image of a broken heart? He communicates peace and consolation. Or under that of poverty? He tells them of recovered birthrights, and of a glorious inheritance above. Divested of metaphor, the office of Christ is to expiate guilt; to deliver from the power of sin; to impart peace; and to bestow a title to the kingdom of

heaven on all who are of the character described in my text.—Let us briefly consider these several offices.

1. Christ takes *away the sin* of those who truly repent and apply to him by faith. For he offered himself a victim to the justice of the Divine law. He made, by his one oblation of himself on the cross, once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. This sacrifice has been accepted by the Father, and the benefit of it is transferred to all those who repent and believe the Gospel. They are no longer captives detained legally or irreclaimably in bonds: “The prey is taken from the mighty. The lawful captive is delivered.” The ransom is paid, and the price of redemption accepted in heaven.

2. They are freed also from the power of sin: And this not merely by the stronger motives to holiness which are proposed in the Gospel, or the more awful sanctions of the Divine law which Christ has set before us, but by the positive help which he communicates through his Spirit to all who believe on him. This is one of the distinguishing excellencies of the Christian dispensation. It not only forbids transgression, but assists and enables men to abstain from it. “This shall be the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

3. It is the office of the Saviour to impart peace to the soul. And shall there not be peace, when the hope of pardon is granted, and when those corruptions, which are the bane of tranquillity, are restrained? Shall there not be peace, when the treasures of infinite love are opened to the soul, and it is recognized as a faithful saying, “that God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should have eternal life?” Shall there not be peace in the breast which feels the force of this inference, “He that spared not his own Son, how shall he

not with him also freely give us all things?" Shall there not be peace, when the conscience is at peace, when the passions are at peace, when the Gospel speaks peace, when God confirms peace to the soul? The Gospel is the ministration of peace. Peace is the legacy of Christ to his Church. "Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you." "And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep the hearts and minds" of his people through Jesus Christ.

4. The title to a glorious inheritance is also conferred by him upon those that believe.—As in the year of jubilee, every inheritance which had been sold reverted to its original owners; as every debt was cancelled and every captive set free, so that then there was an end of bondage and poverty, of distress and disorder, and a new civil æra commenced;—in the same way does the Gospel proclaim a jubilee to repenting sinners. It institutes a new order of things for *them*; with new resources, and hopes, and privileges, and prospects: with deliverance from the thralldom in which they were involved; release from all debts which they had contracted; recovery of all rights which they had alienated; and restoration to their franchises and honours in heaven. Their sins are pardoned; their nature is renewed; their hearts are sanctified; they are restored to all which they had lost by the transgression of their first parent. Having been slaves, they are become sons. Having lived long as "aliens and strangers," they are now made "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God."

Thus we see that Christ came upon earth to confer various important blessings upon mankind: but our *title* to these blessings depends upon our possessing the character to which they are appropriated; and our *enjoyment* of them, upon our embracing by faith that Gospel which is the medium by which they are communicated. We see, therefore, again, the evil of a careless disposition. It prevents attention to that Gospel by the knowledge and realizing apprehension of

which those blessings are conferred. At this season, then, in which we celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God, and meditate upon the hope set before us, let us pay particular attention to this point. Let us see that we have that humble penitent disposition which the Gospel requires. Let us learn to be thankful to God for his inestimable gift; thankful from the experience of its value, from the enjoyment of the freedom, peace, and hope which it communicates. These blessings are of the most valuable kind: they deserve the highest return of praise; they are a gift worthy of God, who bestowed, and of the astonishing means which were devised to convey them. But take these away, and the glory of the Gospel is departed. It sinks down to a mere system of ethics. It no longer answers to the title which it bears: "glad tidings of great joy." The characteristic title of "*Saviour*" becomes an empty name, and the whole system becomes little better than a modification of philosophy; a set of pure rules and decent ceremonies alone. But we have not so learned Christ.

I recommend, in a particular manner, the consideration of this subject to those persons, and I believe they are not a few, who are in some degree persuaded of their guilt and unworthiness, but who rest in that persuasion without taking any steps, at least any proper steps, to remove them. I say, without taking proper steps; for there is an infinite variety of methods to which our minds will have recourse when the conscience is oppressed with guilt. I do not merely speak of listening to the suggestions of infidelity; or fleeing for refuge to dissipation or to vice; of studiously banishing all serious thought upon the subject. These are the resources of the disingenuous, and of the hardened sinner. But I speak rather of the *palliatives*, which many are disposed to apply,—remedies short of that which alone is complete and satisfactory. Such persons will acknowledge their guilt, but they flatter themselves that it may be less than their fears represent

it. They are not quite sure that they have not proposed an unnecessary degree of strictness: they think that God may prove more merciful than He is represented in the Scriptures; or they depend on good qualities to redeem bad actions, and are disposed to think their own both numerous and valuable. They promise yet greater amendment and a higher degree of purity hereafter; and thus, in any or all of these ways, they seek to obtain a peace which at the best is but short-lived and deceitful, and which will fail those who trust to it when they need it most. Believe me, my brethren, there is no solid peace to be found but in a sincere and faithful application to the Saviour. Extenuation of guilt, or confidence in our own power of amendment will but increase the evil. Dismiss such vain expectations. Come at once to Christ, as guilty and miserable sinners; confess to him your sin, and implore from him grace to know it better. Give up all subtuges, and place your whole trust in the Saviour of sinners. In his promises, and in his intercession, you may find solid peace. And be persuaded, in applying to him, that it is his whole yoke which you must take upon you; that all partial reformation will be useless: you must become his disciples in spirit and in truth; nor can you enjoy any solid peace till this is the case. But when once the heart, abandoning its refuges of vanity and lies, is disposed cordially to embrace the Gospel-salvation, and to surrender itself wholly to Christ, then the promises of my text will be found true in their fullest extent. The broken hearted will be healed, deliverance will be granted to the captives, and a jubilee proclaimed to the destitute and hopeless. Then the benefits of this salvation will be clearly known; and they will be found to be worthy of all which has been done to procure them.

May we thus yield ourselves to God in Christ, that we may enjoy these benefits in time and through all eternity! *Amen.*

SERMON XIX.

THE DUTY OF GLORIFYING GOD.

1 Cor. x. 31.

Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

ONE great object of religion is to bring men to a sense of the duty which they owe to God. It is declared of the unregenerate (as distinguished from the righteous,) that God is not in all their thoughts; that “they have no fear of God before their eyes;” that they are “without God in the world;” that they are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” On the contrary, real Christians are described as living no longer to themselves, but unto God; as serving, fearing, and loving God; as putting their trust in him, and as doing every thing to his glory.

The precept, therefore, which is given in my text is not to be viewed as a mere command to practise any particular branch of virtue, but rather as an exhortation to adopt and employ that general principle of true religion which will not only direct to all virtue, but sanctify even the common actions of life.

Let us, therefore, inquire into the *general nature* of this principle, and then endeavour to elucidate its operation by tracing its influence upon our ordinary conduct.

I. To understand the nature of the principle which St. Paul here inculcates, we should observe the cases before him, in the context from which he takes occasion to prescribe this general rule.

This chapter contains advice upon three particular cases of conscience. The *first* respects the lawfulness of assisting at idolatrous feasts; such as were held in pagan temples, and in honour of the pagan worship. Of these entertainments, some Christians, it appears, who were less careful to please God than to gratify their worldly connexions, condescended to partake, and justified their conduct by an argument of this kind; That an idol was, in fact, nothing; that it was a deity of mere imagination; and that, therefore, what was offered in sacrifice to idols had nothing in it which could pollute; that it could have contracted no defilement by this use; nor be at all less proper for food than flesh which had not been sacrificed. To this the Apostle replies, that certainly an idol was nothing; yet still, since the principle upon which idolatrous sacrifices were offered was the worship of false gods, or, as he might more fitly call it, devils, he could say no less of the compliance than that it was "holding fellowship with devils;" and, therefore, absolutely unlawful. "Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?"

The second case was that of buying such flesh in the market: for whatever part of the animal was not consumed on the altar, or distributed for presents and entertainments, was exposed publicly to sale. And to this the Apostle gives his decided sanction. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake." Being designed for common food, it is not liable to the same objection with

what is appropriated to idolatrous feasting: for the offence does not consist in eating what was slain for sacrifice, but in eating of it on such occasions; where it is scandalously abused, to the dishonour of him who gave it. The other is its legitimate and appointed use. Eat, therefore, without inquiry and without scruple: "for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He gave cattle for the use of man: nothing can annul his grant to you, but your own willful perversion of it.

The third case respected the propriety of eating these same meats at the table of an heathen acquaintance; and this is resolved like the last. Being invited as to a common meal, you are in general to partake of it as such, without either uneasiness or remark. "Whatever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake." But are you officiously told that it is a portion of the sacrifice? Or would a weak brother, who regards it as defiled, consider God as dishonoured by your participation of it? Then abstain, on both these accounts, "for his sake that shewed it;" to satisfy your informer, that you give no countenance to such things; and also, "for conscience sake;" for the sake of *his* conscience, who may be wounded or scandalized, or ensnared by your connivance. It might be lawful for you; but things lawful are not always expedient. It might be lawful; but it would not edify. Disregard not, then, the edification of your brother: respect his weakness. Deem it a sufficient reason for your abstinence that you might otherwise grieve him, or incur the risk of corrupting his integrity, by warranting what he esteems a crime. The principle, therefore, is the same whether you eat, or whether, under these or any other peculiar circumstances, you abstain. In both, you shew a respect to God: in the one, by enjoying his bounty with thankfulness, as he designed; in the other, by giving proof of your sincerity in his service, and by respecting even that scrupulosity in your brethren, which arises from their reverence for him. This leads to the general conclusion, not only in these cases

but in all others,—“Whether ye eat or drink,” or abstain from either; in a word, “whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

We see, then, that the principle here inculcated is of the soundest, most enlightened, and vigilant kind; sound, as forbidding strictly whatever is really an offence: enlightened, as it discriminates what is sinful from what only seems so to be: and watchful, in attending not merely to an action as it stands alone, but even to those possible effects of it which might bring dishonour to God. What is wrong in itself is not allowed on any plea of convenience, or in consideration of circumstances which may seem to palliate the evil; but is to be rejected absolutely, and without reserve. What is blameable only on account of mischiefs which it may, incidentally, produce, needs not be too scrupulously avoided, when it can have no such consequence; and yet a probability that such effects may follow, is to be considered as bringing actions the most indifferent within the catalogue of sins. The great rule of our life must be regard to God’s honour; and this rule must be applied on occasions when we perhaps think little of responsibility. “Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do,” says the Apostle, “do all to the glory of God.” This is the end which he proposes for all our actions. There are different ends, which we may propose to ourselves, or others may propose to us. There are uses of all his gifts which he himself prescribes. There are contrary uses to which we, or others, may pervert them. Our conduct, though in itself blameless, may still be dishonourable to *Him*; from the light in which others may view it, and the ill effect it may have on their minds.—But in all such cases what dishonours, or seems likely to dishonour, Him, is to be avoided as sin: what promotes, or bids fair to promote, His glory, must be deemed of strict obligation.

II. Having thus examined the nature of the principle, let us proceed to shew its operation in sanctifying the common actions of life.

It is not often that the best of men have a due sense of the value of Christian principle, in this point of view. And as to the world at large, they can scarcely understand the application of it. With them, religion is confined to acts of worship; morality is the principle of our duty to man: and interest, inclination, custom, convenience are to direct the vast variety of human actions, which are less perfectly of the moral kind. Thus, in all the ordinary conduct of their lives, in their business and their amusements; in the connexions they form, and the society they frequent: in the use of their time, their influence, their fortune, or their talents; in the management of their families; in their habits of personal indulgence; in their common discourse; in their general bearing and behaviour, they live altogether without regard to God. Of any end besides their own gratification; of any control, but from themselves or the world; of any duties, except decency and discretion, they have no thought: and if the glory of God be adverted to, they do not understand how it is to be made the object of their concern. There are, perhaps, few more fatal mistakes, than to suppose that God is glorified only by expressions of reverence, or acts of worship. We glorify him just as truly, when, through the whole progress of ordinary life, we keep his designs, his honour, his cause, in view, as we keep in view our own interest, or the reputation and wishes of a respected parent; when instead of counteracting, affronting, or injuring him, we do him homage and service as we have occasion, and make it, generally, our object to please him. Such a principle will sanctify our whole conduct. It will set a sacred stamp of sanctity and honour even on little things. In the bold imagery of the prophet Zechariah, "there shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness to the Lord." What is meanest and most insignificant shall have its use in his service, and enjoy the full privilege of a consecration.

But let us take a particular instance or two. Take first the duties of any humble and laborious calling;—of an husbandman, of a mechanic, of a servant, of one who must labour for a subsistence, and whose whole time is occupied in the work of his vocation. If a man submits to this lot, as a mere act of necessity: if he goes through his toil with cheerfulness, because he thus supplies his wants, or procures his humble comforts, or hopes, one day to improve his condition; though he may be acting well and wisely, in some points of view, he does nothing to the glory of God. But suppose that he thus reflects on his condition, and that he habituates himself to act from such considerations as these: “I am poor indeed, and must labour that I may live: but who has placed me in this situation? Was it not God who made us all, and who ordains for each of us what he thinks fit, making some poor and some rich; dispensing health and strength to some, and sickness or infirmity to others; bestowing on some great parts and great advantages, while he affords to others only a narrow understanding and scanty means of improvement? What though I am doomed to labour—is it not the common doom? Has not God ordained that man shall eat bread in the sweat of his brow? Is it not, in the present state of things, the necessary condition of the greater part of mankind? And, as he has appointed this lot for me, am I not doing his will when engaged in my daily occupations, as much as one who, with more leisure, is more constantly engaged in attendance upon his worship? I will therefore go to my labour cheerfully: I will pursue it diligently, as God’s appointment: I will consider this as my place in the great family of his creatures, and endeavour to serve him in it: doing the duties of my station with a humble, thankful, devoted mind; honouring him before men by its appropriate virtues; looking to him for my support; thanking him for my success; acting always under his eye, and as bound to consult his pleasure.” Such views would consecrate the labours of the day. Thus would

a man be glorifying God, not only on the Sabbath, but throughout the whole week; not only while he bowed his knee in prayer, but while he was occupied in the common business of his calling. Let it be well observed, however, that it is not by his diligence or his cheerfulness, considered in themselves, that he thus gives glory to God; but by this diligence and cheerfulness, as they spring from true religious principle; from a regard to the great Master who has assigned him his place, and prescribed his duties in the world.

But there may be a question of some importance here. Are these reflections to be continually passing in the mind? Or, is nothing done to the glory of God, when we do not place it thus distinctly before us, as our express and particular object? I answer, When the principle exists and thrives, such reflections will of course be frequently occurring. Under the influence of that Spirit, "without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy," it is by these representations of truth and duty that we must maintain it against other principles which will be struggling in the bosom. But when it is well formed and established, we shall act by it, on all common occasions, not so much from reflection as from habit; and be led into the feelings and duties which our object demands, without recalling it expressly to our thoughts. A parent who lives for the welfare of her child, has no need to reason with herself upon the matter; nor, in every single act which promotes her object, to have it strongly or expressly in her eye. She feels, rather than reasons, she acts rather from habit than deliberation. And so they who live to the glory of God, having formed the habits of their life upon that principle may go on regularly in those habits, with all suitable feelings, and in the practice of all required duties; yet referring to the principle itself in serious moments, and on graver occasions alone. We act, *in general*, from habit rather than from reflection; and, for want of attending to this, many persons of scrupulous minds have been led into great perplexity. They

have possessed the principle of regard to God, but they have mistaken the mode of its operation. They have looked back, therefore, upon a day of useful labour in the duties of their calling, as a day, if not lost, yet not spent to his glory, because not passed in acts of worship, nor in express purposes of honouring him: and, reviewing their whole lives in this spirit have rendered themselves unhappy by the very uprightness of their intentions. Just views, however, of the subject are far from having a tendency to distress the upright heart: on the contrary, they will do more than any thing else to alleviate its burdens. How cheerfully would a good man go forth to his labour, could he regard his daily occupations as the service of his God! Under this persuasion, how calm and tranquil would his mind be kept! How well would he be guarded against murmuring or sloth, and consoled under the little disappointments and petty vexations of his existence! How light and peaceful would those slumbers be which he should have procured by conscious diligence, under the eye of his approving Master in heaven! God exacts no superstitious regard; and he reckons the conscientious discharge of our duties as his appointment, among the services which he will own and recompense.

2. Let me briefly shew the operation of this same principle in another instance.—There are various peculiar duties attached to every rank and relation in life;—to parents and children, for example; to husband and wife; to master and servant. The duties of these relations may be performed, and decently performed, without any regard to God. A heathen parent may have a tenderness of affection for his children, which all mankind must admire. A husband and wife, without any principle of religion, may yet be united in the closest bonds of love. And a master may be kind, or a servant faithful, on whom the authority of their common Master in heaven would have no influence. In such cases, natural affections, or ordinary motives, do that, in part, which the aid and control of a higher

principle would enable them to do much better;—and God is only so far glorified, as the general order and harmony of his creatures demonstrates the perfection of the Creator. But where the heart is renewed, and a regard to God implanted, the influence of this principle will extend to the various relations of life, and all their duties be placed on a new footing. St. Paul explains this, in his Epistle to the Colossians: “Whatsoever ye do,” says he, “in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” How? He proceeds to shew us: “*Wives*, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” “*Children*, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” “*Servants*, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men: knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

It is thus, then, that our regard to God’s honour should appear. It is thus that the consideration of his will, of his presence, of the duty which we owe to *Him*, and the recompense we may expect from Him, are to bear upon the relations and upon the whole conduct of life. Whatever we do, there must be an aim and object beyond all that sense, or worldly prudence, or natural feelings, would suggest. Some reference directly, or remotely, to the will of God, to our business in life as his appointment; to the credit and advancement of his cause in the world; to our own spiritual benefit, should be a ruling motive of our conduct: something which leads us, in a variety of instances, to deny ourselves, and to act as we should not act merely for our own gratification: something which would propose an end above that of worldly men, even in common cases—even where the action, as distinct from its principle, appeared the same. Thus our very amusements and relaxations should be enjoyed *upon principle*. As far as they are subservient to right ends, they may be in-

dulged with a good conscience, nay, considered even as a duty; but when they transgress their proper bounds; when they engross the heart, or dissipate the mind, or waste our time, or unfit us for the service of God—then the principle of regard to his glory should lead us to retrench or abandon them.

Thus, too, the food and rest which we require should be taken upon *Christian principles*.—When we eat, or drink, or sleep, for the needful refreshment of nature, are thankful to God for such refreshment, and desire that the strength thus recruited may be spent in his service,—we do it to the glory of God. But if, on the other hand, we give way, in any of these things, to immoderate indulgence; if we have no end in view but the gratification of carnal desires, no wish but to prolong a life of pleasure and of sin, we are acting in direct opposition to this precept of the Apostle. Thus our principle should be called into exercise on all occasions. Do we receive an insult, or are we treated with neglect? It should induce us to curb the pride and indignation of our hearts, and make us respect the command of Christ:—to “put away wrath,” and “follow after meekness.” It should lead us to follow his example, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to God” as his Judge.—Do we meet with trials and disappointments? There should be a ready recurrence to the principle which teaches us to “hear the rod, and him who hath appointed it;” to “possess our souls in patience;” and to testify our regard to God by a calm and humble resignation to his will. In a word, the principle upon which we act, if we desire to glorify him, should be one which manifests itself more or less clearly, in all the occurrences of life.

Such, then, are the objects we shall keep in view, and such the motives from which we shall act, in proportion as we feel the power and possess the true spirit, of the Gospel.—And now let us turn to our own consciences and hearts. What is our prevailing principle?

Is it the fear and love of God? Or is it our own gratification, or temporal advantage alone? I say *alone*, because we may conscientiously seek our own advantage when it is in subserviency to the will of God. That will and our own interest point frequently to the same line of conduct. But, at all events, we should, in general, judge of our state, not so much by any single action, whether good or bad, (for this seldom determines the character,) as by the general inclination of our minds and the grand principles upon which we act through life. For there is one ruling principle with us all: we live either to God or to ourselves. By nature, every man lives to himself. By grace, he begins to live to God; and in proportion to the better knowledge he obtains, and the greater degree of love to God and to Christ which his faith in the Gospel inspires, in that proportion he not only enlarges the sphere of his duties, but performs them more and more "after a godly sort." Grace in the heart is like a little leaven, which, by degrees, leaveneth the whole lump. It is a principle infused which, by little and little, extends its influence through all the actions of life. It regulates our words and our thoughts; moderates our desires; corrects our tempers; accompanies us into our closets, and into the scenes of our worldly business; teaching us that, in all things and by all ways, we should glorify the name of God, and abound in the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus to his praise.

Again: Let this subject convince us of the error of those who confine religion to devotional duties. No: religion is not merely an act of homage paid upon our bended knees to God; it is not confined to the closet and the church, nor is it restrained to the hours of the Sabbath: it is a general principle extending to a man's whole conduct, in every transaction and in every place. I know no mistake which is more dangerous, than that which lays down devotional feelings alone as the test of true religion. He, indeed, whose piety is genuine, will pour forth his heart to

God in supplication, or in ascriptions of holy praise. A cold and heartless form is foreign to the very nature of Christian worship. But there is such a thing as being very constant in this duty, and feeling much under the preaching of the Gospel, while the common principles of action are of a worldly kind, and the conduct such as by no means "shines before men, so that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven." Let us be convinced that all prayer, all preaching, all knowledge, are but means to attain a superior end; and that end the sanctification of the heart and of all the principles upon which we are daily acting. Till our Christianity appears in our conversation, in our business, in our pleasures, in the aims and objects of our life, we have not attained a conformity to the image of our Saviour, nor have we learned his Gospel aright.

Lastly: would we possess this principle of doing all things to the glory of God, let us first seek to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. The effect is a great one; the motive which produces it must therefore be powerful. Let us love God and we shall serve him faithfully and universally. And here we perceive the efficacy of the Gospel to produce this great change in man. "We all," says the Apostle, "beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Gospel shews us our ruin without God. It discovers to us the misery of our fallen nature; always mistaking the path of happiness, and striking into many devious paths where happiness never can be found. It reveals a Saviour to us; an heavenly Director, to guide our feet into the way of peace. It proclaims the forgiveness of sins through his blood, and the sanctification of our souls by his Holy Spirit. Thus pardoned, thus encouraged, we seek to run the way of his commandments. Gratitude and affection begin to rule in our breasts. The love of Christ now constrains us to live no longer to ourselves, but "to Him who loved

us and gave himself for us." Thus we begin to serve God, and thus we continue to obey him. Fresh displays of his power and mercy overcome our continual propensity to backslide, and lead us to "run with patience the race that is set before us." Self-denial is cheerfully practised. The operation of Divine grace is extended through all branches of our conduct; and we endeavour, in earnest, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, to do all to the glory of God." *Amen.*

SERMON XX.

PROOFS AND REASONS OF THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD.

(PREACHED ON GOOD-FRIDAY.)

Isaiah liii. 3—6.

He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

THAT this passage contains a direct prophecy of Jesus Christ is so plain, that I can scarcely conceive any serious objection to be made to it. The principal doubt which is likely to arise in the mind is, that it is

so literal and particular as to seem to be rather an history interpolated into the text after the events had taken place, than a prophecy delivered seven hundred years before them. But this doubt is instantly removed, by considering that the Jews, the grand enemies of Christ, were the very persons to whom the preservation of this prophecy was entrusted; that they acknowledge it to be genuine, and have never suggested a doubt of its authenticity. If, then, it is genuine, to whom can it relate? It would be a waste of time to attempt to confute the interpretations that have been given by the Jews of late years, by which it is made to apply to Hiezekiah, to Jeremiah, &c. It will here be sufficient to observe, that as in a lock consisting of numerous wards, *that* key alone is the true one which fits all the wards; so in prophecy, that only is the true interpretation of any prediction which fits every part of it; and the more numerous and *uncommon* such parts are, the more manifest is it, in the case of a perfect coincidence, that the true interpretation has been given. I say, the more *uncommon*; because if events are foretold which cannot possibly apply but to a few persons, the interpretation is then proportionably limited. If, for instance, a prophecy should relate to a king, this would narrow the range of interpretation to those who bore the kingly office: if to a king who had died a violent death, this would narrow it still more; if that death was inflicted by his own subjects, it would reduce still more considerably the number of persons to whom it could be applied. But, in the present case, there are circumstances so very peculiar, that they can be applied to one person alone.

The person here spoken of was to be the servant of God, the arm of the Lord, the subject of prophecy. Yet when he came into the world, he was to be despised and rejected of men; he was not to be received as the Messiah; he was to be put into prison; he was to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter; many were to be astonished at him; his visage was to be marred

more than any man's; he was to be numbered with transgressors, and cut off by a judicial sentence out of the land of the living; his grave was appointed with the wicked, yet his tomb was to be with the rich man. And his sufferings were to be of no ordinary kind, and inflicted for no common cause. He was to be wounded for our transgressions, and smitten for our iniquities. Jehovah was pleased to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin, though he had "done no wrong, nor was any guile found in his mouth." But after God had thus made his soul an offering for sin, then he was to revive again; to prolong his days; to erect a spiritual kingdom; to sprinkle many nations; to be advanced above kings, who should shut their mouths before him; to be exalted and extolled, and be very high; to see and be satisfied with the effect of the travail of his soul; to justify many by his knowledge, and to make intercession for transgressors.

Now of these particulars it is evident, that most of them can be applied only to a few persons; some, from their very nature, to none but such a divine and extraordinary person as Jesus Christ; but that to him all are applicable in the plainest and most literal sense. We may conclude, therefore, that if the real import of any prophecy is clear and indisputable, that of the text is so when it is made to refer to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But I did not intend to touch, except incidentally, on the Person to whom this prophecy points. My principal object is to direct your attention to that part of the prophecy which explains the reason why the Messiah was permitted to endure sufferings. "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, he was bruised for *our* iniquities; the chastisement" by which "*our* peace" was to be effected "was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed."

That there should be a Divine Personage who, with any degree of propriety, could by be styled, in a peculiar sense, the son of God—that he should take upon

him our nature, and suffer death upon the cross—is a fact so extraordinary, so entirely out of the common course of things, so unlike any thing else in the world, that we may justly require the strongest *evidence of the fact*, and expect also *some explanation of its cause*.

1. The evidence of the fact is to be collected from the accumulated testimonies of *prophecy*, from the *acts and declarations* of our blessed Lord, and from the decisive *witness of the Holy Spirit*, after the resurrection of Christ, in his various and miraculous influences.

1. How much the spirit of *prophecy* is the testimony to Jesus, we need not remark, after the striking and literal description given of him in my text. It is sufficient to observe, that the attention of mankind was directed towards this illustrious Person by a regular chain of prophecy, continued from the creation of the world. Other persons have been the subjects of prophecy, but of a single unconnected prophecy. Who but Jesus was ever the subject of prophecies, extending from the first record of inspiration to the ceasing of the prophetic spirit under the Jewish dispensation? Who, like him, was the subject of multiplied, distinct, and detailed prophecies; in delivering which the prophets were elevated to the highest tone of inspiration; and displayed the sublimest sentiments which the imagination could conceive, in the loftiest strains which language could dictate? Who but Christ had the universal testimony of the whole chorus of prophets? For to him *all* the prophets give witness. The harp of prophecy seemed to be formed only to celebrate Jesus; and the sacred melody of its highest and most celestial tones was directed to Him, as its inspiring theme, its object, and its glory.

2. And when our blessed Lord at length appeared upon earth, every circumstance relating to him, every action of his life, proved that he was a person totally different from the ordinary children of men. Who but himself was born in a supernatural manner? Whose birth was celebrated like his by multitudes of the heavenly host

chaunting, while they contemplated the holiness and happiness of his kingdom, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and good will to men?" Who, like him, was entrusted with all the grand variety and boundless extent of the Divine power? Who, like him, commanded the winds and seas, and they obeyed him? Who, like him, had the power to cure every disease by a word? When did the evil spirits acknowledge their inferiority in the same manner as they did to him, and promptly depart, as at his bidding, from the bodies of the possessed? When did the dead rise up from their graves, as at his command? All nature, animate and inanimate, acknowledged him, as its Lord. Angels, from above, ministered to him; hell from beneath, submitted to his power; the sea and the air paid homage to him; the sun refused to shine when he hung upon the cross: earth shook to its centre when he expired; and the voice of God, from heaven, audibly proclaimed him to be his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased.

3. After such a display of Divinity, we shall be prepared to receive his own testimony concerning himself. No one of the children of men was ever less ostentatious, less assuming than Christ; for he was the model of lowliness and humility: yet he did not esteem it arrogance to maintain, constantly and plainly, that God was his Father; that he was his only Son; that he had dwelt in heaven before he came upon earth; that the Father had put all things into his hand; that, after suffering death, he should rise again on the third day, and ascend into heaven,—there to dwell with the Father for ever, to sit at his right hand, and to be the intercessor for sinful man.

Now if we take a view of the prophecies concerning him, and the actions of his life, and compare them with his declarations, they will be found in unison with each other. His declarations are uniformly confirmed and supported by both the prophecies and the acts.

4. Immediately upon his ascension into heaven, the extraordinary inspiration of the Spirit, which had long ceased, broke forth with irresistible power, and enlightened the world. Prophecy again revived, in order to speak of him; miracles were generally performed by his disciples in his name; myriads were converted to the Christian faith; the men so converted became witnesses of the truth and power of the Gospel, and cheerfully sealed their testimony with their blood; from the rising to the setting of the sun, Christ was worshipped and glorified: to him each dying believer has intrusted his soul, as to the only hope of mankind; and to him, for 1800 years, throughout the whole church, has every eye been directed, and every tongue been vocal, as their Master and Teacher, their Sacrifice and Saviour, their Lord and God.

Now we ought to observe that it is not on any single fact, any solitary testimony, that we found our persuasion of the high dignity and unrivalled glory of Christ, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world; but on the whole united testimony of prophets, of miracles, of the declarations of Christ, of the effusion of the Spirit, and of the conduct of his disciples. It is upon the union and harmony of all these, forming a continued chain, an extensive mass of evidence, that we fix the foundation of our faith. All these concur, from century to century, from one region of the globe to another, to bear witness to Jesus: prophet answers prophet; earth replies to heaven; angels join their testimony with that of men; all with one consent pointing him out as the Son of God, the only Saviour of sinners?

II. It is necessary to prepare the mind, by previous reflection on the vast and decisive mass of evidence which proves the dignity and glory of Christ, for approaching in a proper frame to the consideration of the question, on what account the Son of God became incarnate and suffered on the cross. And, indeed, these two views of the subject serve strongly to illustrate each

other; for if we consider the dignity of the Son of God, the high expectations raised of his approach, and the Divine testimonies given of his glory, we may be assured that the end which he came to accomplish must have been of the very first importance. On the other hand, if we contemplate that end, as it is made known to us in Scripture, its vast importance and immense magnitude,—no less than the redemption of man, the expiation of sin, the restoration of a fallen world,—it will evidently appear to be such as none but a Divine person could undertake. Its importance justifies the high-raised expectation which the long continued series of prophecy had inspired, and explains the propriety of all the illustrious testimonies which were given to the dignity and glory of Christ. The Saviour of man could not be less than Divine.

Accordingly we are told by the Prophet when he comes to speak of the sufferings of Christ, that they were inflicted not on his own account: he had “done no violence, neither was guile found in his mouth;” but his sufferings were undertaken for our salvation. He was to be wounded for our transgressions; he was to be bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement by which our peace was to be effected was to be laid upon him, and by his stripes we were to be healed. His soul was to be made an offering for sin.

If there appears any difficulty in receiving this testimony concerning the end which the Saviour was to accomplish, let us reflect that it was a transaction entirely of its own kind, nothing similar to it being to be found, according to which we may measure its propriety or explain its nature. Let us also bear in mind, that heavenly subjects are not to be judged of by worldly ideas, or tried at the bar of human reason. And hence arises the difficulty of comprehending those parts of Revelation which relate to heavenly things. From the ignorance of our minds and the imperfection of our faculties, the Revelation must necessarily be accommodated to worldly ideas. It must be an approximation

to truth, rather than truth itself. It must select some earthly analogy, and give an imperfect explanation of heavenly subjects, by a reference to the earthly subjects with which they best admit of being compared. Thus, in speaking of the proper nature and dignity of the Saviour, and his relation to God, the term "Son of God" is used; because the idea of a Son conveys the nearest resemblance of that mysterious union, that intimate connexion, which subsists between Christ and the Father. But yet the term is inadequate to convey to us perfect conceptions. The union is of an infinitely higher and closer nature than earthly words can describe, or human imagination can conceive. And a great part of the errors of man arises from this source, that he judges of God by earthly ideas, and tries his ways by the scanty conceptions of worldly reason. Vain and foolish proceeding! Every thing relating to God, every thing relating to the ways of God, mocks all the efforts of man's understanding. We cannot form a clear judgment of any one of his attributes, or fully comprehend any of his actions. His ways are in the great deep, and his judgments past finding out. Let us, then, when we approach our present subject; one which treats of the very highest and most solemn transaction between God and man: one, confessedly, which has no parallel by which it can be judged, and must therefore rest solely upon its own basis: let us divest our minds of all narrow, partial, grovelling ideas derived from the earth on which we tread, and the poor fallen creatures by whom we are surrounded, and elevate our thoughts to the majesty of God, the sublimity of his attributes, and the glory of his Son. Then we shall see that such was the awful holiness of God, that he thought it right to display that holiness in the most illustrious manner, by making his own Son suffer death as an expiation for sin. Such was his infinite mercy that he withheld not from us his only Son, but gave him up to be the propitiation for our sins. He treats him as the representative of the human race. The Son takes

upon him their nature: he bears in his own body their sins: he voluntarily suffers for their sakes: and God, in accepting what he suffered, accepts them also; pardons, for his sake, their transgression: receives them into his favour, as the redeemed of his Son; and blesses them with infinite and eternal blessings, on account of their relation to him. With him they are raised from death; through him they are translated to heaven. Sanctified by him, their prayers are heard and their imperfect repentance accepted. Through him all mercy, life, and pardon, in a word, all blessings, are dispensed to sinful man.

In addressing you, my beloved brethren, I must address you as sinners in the sight of God. In this point we all agree: *we all like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.* It becomes us, then, seriously to inquire in what mode it will please God to pardon our sins, and restore us to his favour. Here the question is not what steps we may think the most proper to be taken in order to make our peace with God, but what is the way which he has been pleased to appoint for that purpose. The declarations of his will, not our reason, must here be consulted. We know so little of the nature of God, his infinite purity, and the heinousness of transgression in his sight, that we are very inadequate judges of what may be requisite for the pardon of sin. Think not, then, that it is sufficient to repent, and endeavour to avoid sin for the future. Undoubtedly, repentance is absolutely necessary; and a hearty desire and unceasing endeavour to avoid all sin in future are absolutely necessary also. But the question still is, whether God does not require something to make your very repentance acceptable; something to satisfy the justice and holiness of his nature; something on account of which he may deem it consistent with his attributes to receive you into favour. Now the whole scope of Revelation is intended to shew, from the very highest authority, that this is the case; that the merits and death of his only Son form the consideration on account of

which he will pardon and accept you; and that you must, by a lively faith, be interested in that death and in those merits before you can be a sharer in those high privileges. This my text clearly shews; the whole Levitical dispensation shews it; the whole of the prophetic writings shews it. It is the sum and substance of the New-Testament; every page exhibits it; every miracle attests it; every effusion of the Holy Spirit confirms it anew. Allow that Jesus Christ is the mighty Saviour on whom alone we must depend for salvation, and every thing in Revelation is in harmony: exclude him from that office, and the whole system of the Gospel becomes strange, disproportionate, and unintelligible. Too much is there attributed to Christ; too lofty names are given to him; too high expressions are used concerning him, if he is not the grand Mediator between God and man. and if salvation is not wholly to be obtained through faith in him.

Knowing, my brethren, that ere long you and I must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and being most deeply convinced of the awfulness of that solemn trial, I cannot but be very anxious that in that day we may be found justified and accepted before God. And I fear lest, through the pride of reasoning, or the carelessness of our hearts, we should be found to have neglected the great salvation which God has so graciously provided for us. It is not a matter of indifference whether our religion is conformed to the model God has given us. It becomes a crime of no light degree to neglect the salvation of God's appointment, a salvation purchased at so dear a rate as the sacrifice of his beloved Son;—to reject (as all who neglect this salvation virtually do) the only Son of God, given as the greatest benefit ever conferred on mankind. My brethren, I entreat you by the whole scope of Revelation, which tends to exalt Christ as the only Saviour; by all the great and glorious things which are related of him in Scripture; by the miraculous powers with which he was endowed; by the agony and pain of his most precious death; by his glorious resurrection and ascension; by the coming of

the Holy Ghost to testify of him;—I entreat you, by every thing which was held dear and sacred among the primitive Christians, who willingly sealed their attachment to him by their blood;—think not lightly of him who was wounded for our transgressions, who was bruised for our iniquities. In our estimation of Christ there can be no medium. Either he must be All in All in our esteem; our Propitiation, our Intercessor, our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Life, our King, our Lord; or he must be degraded to the level of a common man; and in this case, we vainly endeavour to free ourselves from one difficulty by encountering a multitude of others which would render the whole of Revelation nugatory, and its system irrational. If we ascend up to heaven and place ourselves before the dread tribunal of God, there Jesus Christ holds the same rank and high dignity which he claimed upon earth;—there the angels adore him continually;—there he sits at the right hand of God, in all the honour of the Divine Majesty;—there he rules Lord of the heaven above; the keys of death and hell are put into his hands; he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man openeth. Now he offers to be our Almighty Saviour: O let none here be found at that great day to have rejected this salvation!

Would you then pay due respect to the Saviour, the foundation must be laid in a deep sense of your need of salvation, and in a clear view of your obligations to him. When the soul is properly sensible of its weakness, its unworthiness, its defilement, its inability to do any thing good, it will receive with joy the glad tidings that God has provided a Saviour, even his only begotten Son. Then will he be the principal object in our esteem. No words will be strong enough to express our gratitude to Him and to the Father. We shall humbly place our trust and confidence on him: we shall commit our souls into his hands: we shall rest with holy hope on his promises: we shall feel an inexpressible love to his name: we shall consider ourselves as no longer our own but

his, bound to serve him with our bodies and souls which are his: we shall cheerfully make every sacrifice which he requires, and comply readily with every precept he gives us. His love will constrain us to a ready, impartial, and constant obedience. His mercy will elevate our highest hopes. His goodness will gild the whole scene of life. Christ will be all in all to us. Daily shall we make application to him for wisdom, grace, and strength; and daily shall we praise him for the communication of his grace, and the hopes of his glory: in a word, we shall possess a new life in Christ; old things will have passed away—our careless, superficial, cold form of religion—and all things will have become new; and all things will be “of God who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” “For he hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

This day, this all-important day, on which we celebrate the grandest and most interesting transaction which ever took place in this theatre of the world, ought strongly to direct our thoughts to the nature and end of that great event. May the prophet’s view of it be ours, while with mingled emotions of wonder, love, and joy, we contemplate the Son of God wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities! With the Apostle may we exclaim as we reflect on the length and breadth, the height and depth, of the love of Christ here manifested; “God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of Christ, by whom I am crucified to the world and the world to me!” And, with the whole chorus of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect in heaven, may we say with unutterable gratitude and affection, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and hast made us kings and priests unto our God. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” *Amen.*

SERMON XXI.

ON THE PEACE ARISING FROM TRUST IN GOD.

Isaiah xxvi. 3.

*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is
stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.*

IT might be thought, that in a world so full of troubles and evils as the present, a proposal to keep the mind in perfect peace would be received with serious attention at the least; with eagerness, if it promised to be successful, and, if made in the name and by the authority of God, with the most confident expectation of the blessing. Nothing can be more evident than that men stand greatly in need of a support upon which to rest their troubled minds. All are exposed to distress in various ways;—from severe and painful disappointments; from still more serious calamities; and from fears and forebodings of evil, which are often as painful as the realities themselves. Nay, a very considerable number are actually suffering under trials which threaten continually to overwhelm them. Peace is more or less

a stranger to the bosom of them all. They live in a state of restless agitation, far, very far, from the calm and quiet which they crave; and yet, even in this state of mind, there are but few who will give that welcome to the promises of the Bible which, from the nature and design of them, we might so reasonably expect. They want peace, but they do not think of finding it there. I speak not here of unbelievers, but of persons who, in a general way, give credit to the revelation of God. Many, even of these, will go on sorrowing in their afflictions without hope, as if there were really no hope for them: and, while the short and sure road to peace is marked out, by God himself, in the Scriptures; while the Gospel, which they hold in their hands, sets the object of their wants and wishes in full view before them; they make as little use of that Gospel in their distress, have as little expectation of relief, or support, or comfort from it, as if they were infidels and heathens. The fact will not be disputed, but how must it be accounted for? Chiefly I conceive from the very low and false ideas which men entertain of the nature and design of religion. They do not consider it as a remedy which the mercy of God provides for all the miseries of our condition. They view it not as his manifestation of grace and good-will to man, but rather as a system of painful duties which he requires them to discharge. Looking first at the self-denial and sacrifices which it demands, and forming their conceptions of its nature from these views, they consider it rather as adding to their burdens, as calculated, by the heavy obligations which it imposes, to produce deeper gloom and more painful anxiety, and thus to increase and aggravate their distresses; than as contributing in any way to their consolation, or as likely to promote the peace and happiness of their lives. This is indeed the impression which minds corrupt like ours would be *apt*, in the first instance, to receive from so pure and holy a religion. Its contrariety to their own nature would seem to afford but little hope of comfort:

and they would of course be but little inclined to look for comfort there.

But, O ye sons and daughters of affliction, allow me to present religion to you under another aspect, which is perhaps new, but which ought to be peculiarly interesting to you.—I propose it as the best and surest source of peace. This it professes to be: let it be our part to make the trial. The Scripture declares, that God will keep that man in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on him. Give credit to this declaration. Do not practically deny the truth of a revelation which you profess solemnly to believe. Remember that this is not a detached and solitary position. It is not one passage of Scripture only which declares, that true peace is to be found by trusting in God; but the doctrine is every where interwoven into the very fabric and texture of Divine truth. Happy would you be if you would give entire credit to it.

The words of my text naturally suggest three points of consideration:

I. The nature of the duty here commended, that of staying the mind on God.

II. The blessing annexed to it; a state of permanent and perfect peace;—and,

III. The reason assigned for communicating this blessing, because confidence is placed in God.

My chief object in this discourse will be to explain the first of these; namely, the *nature of the duty here commended*.

To stay the mind on God is to trust in him confidently; to repose securely on his care and protection; to be persuaded that he will order and appoint all things well; to place a firm reliance on the goodness of his nature, and on the certainty of his over-ruling providence.

But here we should very carefully distinguish between a just and well-founded confidence in God, and a confidence not just, and not well-founded, which is too often mistaken for it.

Many persons entertain a kind of trust in God, neither founded on the principles nor warranted by the authority of Scripture. They conceive of God as of a being infinitely kind and good, who pities the miseries of his creatures, and though circumstances may not admit of the entire removal of them at present, will yet, in a short time, effect his gracious purpose, and either make amends to them in this life for their sufferings, or give them ample recompence in the life to come. According to this system, therefore, there is evil in the world, which seems to have sprung up independently, as it were, of God, the progress of which he is continually counteracting and will ultimately overcome; though time must elapse before he completes the triumph. And the duty of man therefore is, to suffer with patience and cheerfulness, in a full persuasion of the power and goodness of his Creator, and that he will make all things work for good.

The system is the more dangerous, because it wears the mask of piety. By representing God in an amiable point of view, as a most gracious benevolent being, it appears as if framed to do him honour, while it is in fact a misrepresentation of his nature; and directly contrary to the character he has given of himself. Being well suited to a sceptical turn of mind, it is a favourite system with Deists and freethinkers of all times. And tending necessarily to allay all apprehension of God's wrath, and to prevent all remorse or compunction for sin, it leads men quietly on in the path of destruction, even while they flatter themselves that theirs are the most exalted conceptions of the Deity, and the only just views of his religion.—Moreover, it is no novelty. The error of the Manichees, an heretical sect in the early ages of the Church, was at bottom very much the same. It supposed, that there were two beings or principles of contrary qualities and dispositions, from whose contending influence resulted the mixed and chequered state of things on earth;—the one unhappy and malignant, the author of all the evil which

we see; the other blessed and benevolent, continually resisting that evil, and author of all the good which prevails in the creation.

Modern infidels, indeed, have dropped the idea of two independent warring powers: but they still account for the evil on principles much the same, as originating against the will of the supreme and merciful Creator; as what he is continually opposing, and will certainly at last destroy. They do not look upon evil as inflicted immediately by God, but rather as an imperfection, the ground of which was laid in the very constitution of moral beings; and which, though it cannot be entirely prevented, will yet be graciously overruled in the issue, to the production of a much greater degree of good.

I would earnestly warn you, my brethren, against admitting any representation of God, as a good and merciful being, which does not clearly and fully acknowledge his *justice* also.—Of the Divine goodness it is impossible to form conceptions too high, but it is easy to form false ones; such as are equally contrary to Scripture and to fact, and such as are of dangerous tendency, though masked under a specious appearance. His justice is full as important a part of his character; and it is as fully manifested to us. To trust aright in God, we must trust in a being such as God is described to us in Scripture; a being holy, and angry with the wicked; just in punishing transgression, though long-suffering and of great goodness to those who seek and serve him. Every thing in our religion depends on the kind of Deity which we frame to ourselves. Men may flatter themselves that they trust in God, when they trust only in a phantom of their own imagination; a being, perhaps, as unlike the God of Scripture, as the Jove of the ancients, the Allah of the Mahometans, the Brama of the Hindoos, or the Great Spirit of the American Indians.

To trust in God aright, is, also, to place a confidence in him *which is warranted by his own word*.—Having

just ideas of his nature, we must take care that we expect nothing from him which his word has not warranted us to believe he will do.

If a man depends upon him for that which he has not promised, such a confidence is likely to end in disappointment, and so to produce mistrust and infidelity, instead of cherishing faith, or promoting a pious frame of mind. Many there are who trust in God to deliver them from their temporal distresses; from pain, from sickness, or from death; who have no warrant from Scripture for any such expectations. And these persons, when disappointed, are ready to reflect on the blessed Promiser as unfaithful to his word; to feel towards him as if he deluded his suffering creatures; and, having invited them to rely on him for relief, only raised their hopes in order to aggravate their sorrows.

But how far then, it may be asked, and for what purposes, may we trust in God?

Here the first thing to be considered is, whether we have a right to trust in him at all; in other words, whether we are interested in the covenant of grace which he has made with those who believe in Christ Jesus.

Confidence in another is founded either upon his general character or upon some express promise which he has given. Now we who are sinners can have no access to God, and can expect no favour from him, except on the terms of that covenant of peace which he has made with us in his Son our Saviour. Upon that covenant, therefore, we must repose our trust; keeping it always in mind, that as without this we could have no claim to his blessings at all, so our claim to them depends on our possessing the characters to which they are promised in Scripture. Of these promises, some are general; belonging to every member of the visible church; indeed, to all mankind, who will hear, receive, and apply for them: such as, that "they who ask shall have; that they who seek shall find: and that to them who knock it shall be opened." "Return unto

me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."—Such promises as these are made without restriction. Upon them any man may safely rely; that is, he may be assured that if he desires, so as heartily to solicit them, his request shall be granted, and the blessing bestowed. He who cometh, that is, whosoever cometh to Christ, shall in no wise be cast out.—But the greater number are of a less extensive kind of promises, made only to believers: to those who receive the truth in the love of it, and have experienced its power and virtue in the soul. Thus it is promised, that, "the Lord will be a sun and a shield," that "there shall be no want to them that fear him," and that "he will make all things work together for their good." There is encouragement for men to cast their burdens upon the Lord, with full assurance of support. There is hope given of direction in difficulties, of final victory over sin, and release from sorrow: of peace in death, and eternal blessedness beyond it. As it respects this class, we have, of course, no claim, and can indulge no reasonable expectation, till we have ground (such as the Scripture itself will allow) to judge ourselves true disciples of the Redeemer, possessing the seal and witness of his Spirit, and interested in all the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of peace.—Nay, many promises, have a still further restriction; and are addressed, not to believers in general, but to such only as excel in some specific grace, or are exemplary in some duty of the Christian life; as to the meek, to the faithful, to the merciful, to the liberal. And for want of attending to this, good men themselves may be disappointed, nay even be deeply discouraged, because promises are not made good to them which, in reality, were given to a disposition, or a course of conduct, which is not yet theirs. The great point, however, is to be true disciples of Christ. What, then, is implied in this:

It is implied, in the first place, that we have come to him as guilty sinners, to be cleansed by his blood from all the guilt and defilement of sin; that we are looking to him alone for salvation; placing no confidence in our duties or our merits, but relying solely upon the Son of God as our Saviour and our Advocate with his Father in heaven.

In the next place, it is supposed that we are living with a steady eye to the precepts and ordinances of Christ, maintaining a constant intercourse and communion with him in prayer; treasuring up his word in our hearts; setting his example before us as our pattern; and endeavouring that our whole life may be a life of faith in him. Unless this be the case, we are evidently not his true disciples; we have "neither part nor lot" in him; and, therefore, cannot be entitled to the blessings which belong to his people.

But whoever does thus possess a sincere faith in Christ, and is uprightly endeavouring to serve him, has a title to trust God, according to the terms of his covenant, for all to which he stands pledged in behalf of true believers: and it is the indispensable duty of such persons to place this warranted trust and confidence in him; as much so as to beware of expectations which have no warrant. It is never promised in the Gospel, for instance, that the disciples of Christ should be exempt from sufferings. They must not, therefore, trust in God for this. Indeed, it is rather intimated that they shall have a large share of them. Christ and all his apostles were great and constant sufferers while they abode in this evil world: and the disciples must tread in their steps—like them be made perfect by sufferings. Such sufferings are part of the dispensation of grace, and to be considered (on account of their salutary influence) as proofs of the parental care and affection of the Most High: "for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" But they may confidently trust that in all their sufferings they shall be supported; that their trials will not be greater than

they are able to bear; and that all which are appointed for them shall issue in their good, that is, in their spiritual good; which ought to be esteemed not only the first, but the only real good. They may trust confidently that their Saviour will be present with them, and sanctify all to them; that the trial of their faith, though it be tried by fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. They may hope, without danger of disappointment, that, as the outward man decayeth, the inward man will flourish more and more; and that, as they are more destitute of earthly consolations, they will enjoy more of those which are heavenly.

Such a confidence in God they may justly entertain with respect to all present difficulties and trials. Nor do I deny that a reasonable hope may be indulged, though not perhaps so firm an assurance, of something more than this: for the goodness of God is so great, and he is so rich in mercy and bountiful in blessing, that there are many things which we may humbly expect from him, even beyond what he has expressly promised. He is accustomed to do exceeding and abundantly for his people, above all that they can ask or think. His faithful servants may therefore hope (though not with such confidence as for a promised blessing—they may hope, however,) that he will grant them many tokens of his care and love; as that he will spare some beloved object at their request; will bestow on them some needful comfort, or deliver them from some irksome trial. They may pray for these things: and when they consider the character of their God, to whose goodness no limits can be assigned, they may cherish a reasonable expectation that their prayers will not be in vain. What a scope and range does this inexhaustible bounty, this paternal tenderness, afford for the humble unassuming hope of a believer! Yes: let us always approach God as the most bountiful of beings: let us always look up to him as the most tender of parents; and

be assured that "no good thing will be withheld from them that fear him."

Such, confidence, then, and such reasonable hope in God may be entertained by every real Christian, with respect to temporal things; but let it be ever remembered, that all temporal blessings whatsoever are, on the very first *principles* of our religion, to hold only a very subordinate place in our esteem. It is the object of Christ to wean his people from all which is transitory and earthly, in order that their affections may be fixed upon enjoyments which are pure, substantial, and eternal. The promise of all temporal blessings, therefore, is limited, is conditional, is general; but the promises of spiritual blessings—the best blessings in the estimation of Christ, the only blessings which can truly be considered as important—these are offered much more freely, much more fully. We are allowed to hope in God for many temporal mercies; but we are encouraged, we are expected, we are commanded to look, not only with hope, but with certain expectation, for all spiritual blessings which we may need. On him, therefore, we may rely confidently, in the use of the appointed means, to grant us grace that we may overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; grace that we may withstand all temptations; grace to glorify and serve our Redeemer, by a life and conduct becoming our Christian profession; grace to die in faith and Christian hope, and to enjoy a blissful immortality. For these we may trust God confidently: and if we can trust him here, there is little of any other kind the loss of which needs to give us much disturbance.

The Christian, then, who stays his soul upon God, is one who entertains just and noble conceptions of the nature and character of the Being on whom he depends. He knows that he is a just and holy Being; that he requires all his creatures to be holy; and that he sent his Son into the world to make expiation for sin, and "to purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." He knows himself also to be a miserable sin-

ner, unworthy of any favour or notice from God; but he knows also that Christ has made reconciliation for iniquity, and that he delights to confer blessings on his people, for the sake of his "beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased." He looks forward, therefore, with the most cheerful confidence, to all the future events of life. Whatever they be, he knows they will be well ordered; such as will tend ultimately to promote his best interests, and to glorify the name of Christ. If afflictions are appointed, they will not be appointed unnecessarily: they will be ordered in number, weight, and measure; they will either be proportioned to the strength and faith which we have, or God will give us more grace. He will be with us in the midst of them: he will neither leave us nor forsake us in the hour of need; but, on the contrary, will then be more especially present with us: will support and cheer us with spiritual consolations, and convert what would be else a severe calamity, into a gracious and profitable visitation, calculated to purify the soul, to endue it with all spiritual blessings, and to manifest the kindness of parental love.

This is the proper affiance of a believer: and it is frequently and beautifully expressed by the holy men whose acts are recorded, for our example and instruction, in the Sacred Writings.

"In the Lord I put my trust; why say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird to the hills? The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble: therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of her: she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early. They that know thy name will put their trust in thee, for thou hast not forsaken those that seek thee. O Lord God

of hosts, blessed is the man who trusteth in thee. Our fathers trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered. Because thou hast been my help, therefore, in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. I am continually with thee. Thou hast holden me by thy right hand. Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory."

I have thus endeavoured to fulfil my chief object in this discourse, which was to illustrate the nature of Christian confidence. I cannot, however, conclude, without a word or two on the blessing here annexed to it, and the reason named for communicating that blessing.

It is plain the man who trusts in God will be kept in perfect peace: for what can disturb him? Can any troubles assail him, which the Lord has not appointed, or under which he cannot support him? It may be justly observed that the contemplation of God's greatness tends to level the inequalities of all finite things. The distinction of great and little vanishes, when the immensity of his nature and attributes is before us. And thus, while we contemplate him, and stay our souls upon him for support; the trials to which we may be exposed appear, in this view, to be all on an exact equality. There is not one which we can select, and say it will be too hard for us in his strength. Nor, on the other hand, is there one blessing which he has allowed us to hope for, of which we can even imagine that it is too much to expect from him. Any thing is too much to be expected, while we look at ourselves: nothing, while we look to God through Christ. The faith, therefore, of a Christian may overlook all distinctions, and rest its dependence on Almighty Power, on Inexhaustible Bounty, on Infinite Goodness, on Immeasurable Love! What peace must not this convey to the soul! What a contrast to that fretting anxiety of the mind, when it is ever in dread of approaching evils; when it shrinks in vain from them, and looks

round in vain to escape them; when it builds what hope it has upon the sand, and finds the edifice continually tottering to its base; when it has nothing stable, nothing unchangeable, nothing out of the reach of storms and tempests, on which it can repose; no delightful acquiescence in the dispensations of a wise and gracious Providence; no cheering views of the goodness and mercy that surround us; no resting-place upon the bosom of a Father's love. Wretched indeed is the state of such a mind! It is, like the bark which has lost its anchors and its helm, the sport of changing winds and waves; tossed here and there on a vast and trackless ocean, yet never approaching the haven it desires;—while he who firmly trusts in God, is like one sitting securely on the summit of a rock, where he beholds unmoved the swelling of the billows and the fury of the tempest which rages at his feet in vain.

We must observe here, that it is said, "*Thou* wilt keep him in perfect peace." The solid peace and tranquillity which a faithful disciple of Christ enjoys is not merely the effect of his principles; it is the gift of God. It is God who watches over him; who communicates peace to him; who suggests considerations proper to ensure it, who delivers the mind from all vain alarms. However excellent our principles may be, the application of them to our own circumstances is the point of most importance to us. And this application depends not always upon ourselves. If our security is founded upon the care and providence of God, he will take care that those who trust him shall be kept in perfect peace. Blessed are they who are thus kept by the Almighty: of them it may be truly said, "Because thou hast made the Lord thy refuge, even the Most high thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, nor shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

This peace which God gives is called a *perfect* peace, from the nature of it, rather than on account of

its degree. It is a peace which is perfect, when compared with the peace of the world; perfect as having a foundation which cannot be moved; perfect, as far as the faith from which it springs is perfect. It does not, however, follow that this faith may not sometimes fail; nor that this peace may not partake of the imperfection of the vessel which contains it. But even here we may trust to the mercy of God. Faith is his gift. He is the Author and Finisher of it; While Peter's faith was strong, it produced its complete effect; he walked upon the waters: but as soon as his faith failed, he began to sink. Yet still, when he cried unto the Lord in his trouble, he delivered him out of his distress. The arm of the Almighty was extended, and his sinking servant saved. And this peace is communicated to him who trusteth in God, simply *because* he trusteth in him.

Faith gives glory to God; and this perhaps, is the reason why he has made it the instrument of conveying to us so many and so great blessings. It is evidently the design of Revelation to lead men to glorify God, to honour him as the source, and the only source, of all good; and to humble the pride of man, and stain all his boasted glory. On this account it is, that even where peace is granted to man, it is granted to him by means of trust in God, and on account of this confidence in him. Thus all the glory is ascribed to God; and if the dispensations of God in this world are ordered and appointed with a view of preparing us for a higher and purer state, there is, perhaps, no point which is of more consequence for us thoroughly to understand and be acquainted with, than the glory of God, as the only source of all wisdom and good.

SERMON XXII.

ON BEARING THE CROSS, AND FOLLOWING CHRIST.

Luke xiv. 27.

And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

OUR Lord spake these words on the occasion of his beholding the great multitudes which followed him. It is as if he had said, "Think not that because you press to hear me and extol my works, you are therefore entitled to the blessings of my kingdom: much more than this is required of those who are my disciples indeed. My disciple must prefer me to father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea to his own life. 'If any man come after me, and hate not his father,' that is, if he do not regard his father with a love comparatively less than his love to me, 'and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' And such is the sinful state of the world, that every follower of mine will be actually

called upon to shew that he has this decided preference for me. He must *take up his cross*." This expression has reference to the custom of making the malefactor carry his cross to the place of execution. "He must be willing to suffer both in person and reputation. He must *follow me*, follow me in his spirit and in his conduct, and be partaker of the treatment I meet with." And since the profession of the Gospel thus implied pain and self-denial, he required his followers to consider before hand whether they were able to submit to the suffering. "Let him sit down first, and count the cost."

This subject leads us to consider what it was in the religion of Christ which so remarkably required his disciples to bear their cross. That a spirit of opposition to Christ, and a severe persecution of him and his followers, arose, we all know; but how was this excited? What was there in the nature of the Gospel which so unavoidably produced hostility? In what points was it so contrary to the spirit of the world that men would not bear it, and that such a fortitude and indifference to character were requisite in those who embraced it as might be justly compared to the taking up of our cross and carrying it?

It may be thought by some a sufficient reply, that Christ propagated a new religion, and that his attack on the prevailing prejudices of man could not fail to provoke opposition. But this is not a complete answer; for it is not certain that because a man propagates a new religion he must be hated. Much depends on the nature of the religion which he introduces: it may be weak and futile, and then might only be neglected; it may be absurd, and might be ridiculed; it may accord with worldly wisdom and policy, and then might be approved; it may be elegant and refined, and might excite the admiration of many persons. Our Lord, indeed, did not establish a religion altogether new, yet was he persecuted and opposed. He professed his full belief in the Revelation given by Moses: he had been

circumcised, and had carefully observed the precepts of the Law, both moral and ceremonial. No one was a more punctual attendant at the temple and in the synagogue; and no one spake more respectfully of the Law and the Prophets; and his disciples were remarkable for an attachment to the Mosaic ritual, which even all their proficiency in the religion of their Master was scarcely able to do away.

Doubtless several causes tended to produce opposition to Christ and to his Apostles, causes varying at different times or in different ages. The great cause was, the general contrariety of the genius of his religion to the common spirit and temper of the world. It was the opposition of sin to piety. Hence men of many religions agreed in their hostility to our Lord and to his disciples. The hypocritical Pharisees, the proud Scribes, the profane Sadducees, the corrupt multitude, hated him though a Jew, and though he asserted the truth of their Scriptures and the honour of their Prophets. He was equally opposed by the corrupt Heathens. On the other hand, we do not hear of any truly pious persons amongst the Jews, or of peculiarly well-disposed individuals among the Heathens, rejecting Christ with disdain or abhorrence. These honoured him. A devout Nicodemus, an upright Nathaniel, a religious Centurion who was not a Jew, paid respect to him, and were prepared to receive his word.

If we inquire what was the kind of self-denial inculcated by our Lord, we shall find that it had respect to the desire of wealth, the love of fame, and general self-indulgence. When he explained to the Apostles the sufferings which he should undergo, and Peter began to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee;" he reprov'd Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." He added, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." Let him renounce a

life of care and worldly distraction, and prepare to suffer if it be the will of God. Having spoken of the corrupt lusts natural to man, he adds, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; and if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee;" that is subdue your passions, mortify your corrupt inclinations, though they be as dear to you as a right hand or a right eye. Part with them, however painful the separation may be.

The religion of Jesus Christ had, therefore, no charms for a worldly, proud, and sinful heart. It gave scope to no ambitious thoughts; it gratified no evil passion; it tolerated no beloved sin; it enjoined poverty of spirit, deadness to the world, and self-mortification. It called the affections to things above, and required the interest of others to be preferred to our own. It insisted upon the forgiveness of injuries:—if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he be naked, clothe him. It made Christian greatness consist in a more extended usefulness and deeper humility. "Whosoever will be great amongst you, let him be your servant." Such a religion would not please the taste of the chief priests and scribes; it was too humiliating; nor of the pharisees; it was too spiritual: nor of the vicious; it was too pure and holy. But it suited the poor in spirit: it suited those who mourned for sin, and were weary and heavy laden with its burden; those who were anxious to serve God, and disposed to make any sacrifice for his sake.—The manner in which it was received by many is most instructively described in the parable of the Marriage Supper. One of those invited had bought an estate, and must needs go and see it. Another was immersed in business: he had bought a yoke of oxen, and must needs go and prove them. A third was occupied with domestic cares and enjoyments;—I have married a wife and cannot come. The offer was then made to the poor and destitute, in the highways and hedges; to the blind, and halt, and lame; to those who looked upon themselves as unworthy of the invitation.

and who made no excuse. Dives, engrossed with the enjoyments of this life, was indisposed to receive the Gospel, while a forlorn Lazarus gladly embraced it. The poor prodigal was willingly accepted; while the elder brother, in the pride of his heart, asserted his goodness, and would not come in. The woman who was a sinner, to whom much had been forgiven, embraced the feet of Jesus; while the less openly corrupt, but less humble, Simon, entertained no love for his illustrious Guest. Thus the publicans and sinners went into the kingdom of heaven, while the pharisees and scribes were rejected. The rich ruler, who affirmed that he had kept all the commandments from his youth, preferred his estate to a treasure in heaven; while the humble publican, Zaccheus, who voluntarily engaged to give one half of his goods to the poor, and if he had injured any man to restore fourfold, had salvation brought to his house. And, to bring no more instances, the self-justifying pharisee in the temple was rejected; while the self-accusing publican, who durst not lift up his eyes to heaven, went down to his house justified.

I repeat, that the spirit of the world was opposite to that of Jesus Christ. "I am not of the world," he said; "and, if ye were of the world, the world would love its own." "What is highly esteemed, amongst men, is abomination with God." The world loves distinction, luxury, pleasure, ease, self-indulgence. The man of the world is one who labours to advance himself in wealth or honours: who is well versed in the ways of men; and knows how to turn every thing to his advantage or enjoyment. He is not one who is distinguished by his devotion, his self-denial, his charity, his humility, his tenderness of conscience, his desire of spiritual blessings; he is not one who mourns for sin, who is of a contrite heart, and who hungers and thirsts after righteousness. This worldly spirit Christ came to oppose, in all its shapes and appearances. He was himself of an entirely different character. He sought the favour of God, rather than that of men; the hon-

our which cometh from God, rather than that which cometh from man; he was meek, and lowly, humble and unassuming, disinterested and self-denyng. He shewed his indifference to worldly things by his poverty,—not having a place where to lay his head; and his humility, by the patience with which he received the most provoking insults. His conversation and his thoughts were occupied by subjects far higher than the vanities of this life, and quite uninteresting to worldly men; and his whole life was engaged in accomplishing that for which the world did not care.

And what he was, he required his disciples to be. They were to be distinguished by not being of the world. They were to follow Christ in the regeneration. They were to become new creatures; to put off the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man which is renewed after the image of God. This was required of them, although they were already Jews; although they were called the people of God; although they had been circumcised; although they regularly worshipped in the temple, and punctually observed the rites and ceremonies of their religion.

It is a great though common mistake, to suppose that Christ came to introduce an entirely new religion; that he came to substitute Christian for Jewish forms of worship, and to baptize the heathens who should leave off the practice of idolatry. It would be more just to say, that Christ came to oppose a worldly spirit; to mortify sin wherever it was found: to introduce the substance of religion in the place of the shadow; the spirit instead of the letter. A Jew converted by him, might continue to be a Jew, but he would now worship God in spirit and in truth: he would be adorned with graces which few Jews possessed—with humility, meekness, and deadness to the world.

The Jewish religion had been given by God. It contained the seeds of every truth afterwards revealed, though some of them were very imperfectly developed: it afforded scope for piety, for lively devotion, for holy

confidence, for inward purity, and for universal integrity. But the Jews had greatly degenerated. They were generally worldly, proud, vain, sensual, and thus alienated from the life of God in the same manner as the heathens. In what respect was a proud, covetous Jew better than a proud or covetous Heathen? Surely, he was in the sight of God the more abominable of the two.

I hope I shall not be understood to intimate, that the only ground of offence at Christ was the purity of his doctrine, or that the only object of his coming was our instruction in holiness. Offence was also given by his representations of his own dignity; and he came principally for the purpose of offering a sacrifice for sin, and sending forth his Spirit, to testify of his dignity and make known the value of his sufferings; I assert only, that one considerable cause of the opposition given to his doctrine was its contrariety to the natural worldliness and corruption of the human heart.

He might, however, have delivered the purest doctrines with little opposition, if he would have denounced no condemnation against those who refused to follow him; or if he would have represented the profession of his religion as sufficient, though unaccompanied by a renovation of the life. It was the change visible in his disciples which gave the offence. The world will tolerate doctrines, however pure, or however absurd, as long as they do not affect the practice. It is only when they are found leading to a conduct different from that of the world, that they become matter of jealousy or censure. The purity of the real disciples of Christ was a tacit, but severe, reproach to all who did not adopt it. One perhaps, of a family, became a disciple; immediately the change in his conduct was seen: he no longer yielded to customs in which he had before joined without scruple: he no longer shared in dissipated pleasures: he lost that unity of sentiment and pursuit which had associated him with many a former friend. He would become, in their judgment, unreasonable, over-exact, righteous over

much: the gay would pronounce him to be dull; the worldly would regard him as extravagant; the wise and prudent as foolish and rash. His company would grow irksome to them, and theirs less pleasing to him. He would be studying to be more conformed to Jesus Christ; and they must see, that if he was right, they certainly were wrong: and, as the authority of Christ was not yet established, and as his religion contradicted the prejudices derived from their ancestors, they were not likely to be measured or temperate in their resistance to it. They saw its tendency to interrupt their peace; they knew enough of it to be apprized that it represented them as void of true piety, and exposed to the condemnation of God.

Let us now direct our contemplations more immediately to ourselves. Let us suppose Jesus Christ and his Apostles revisiting the world in the same character in which they were once seen in Judea. Let us imagine them among us. What would then be their manner of addressing us? Would they say; "Here we have found a true church, a body of Christians in whom there is little to reprove or amend. All here are real converts. The world does not reign in their hearts. They are all animated by a pure zeal for the Divine honour, and bring forth in abundance the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. We see not among these believers, as amongst the Jews, men who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. We find no thirst of filthy lucre, no desire of the honours and wealth of this world. All are humble; all are engaged in working out their salvation with fear and trembling. The law of God is in their hearts, and directs all their actions. They are seeking not to be like the great and mighty of the earth, but to resemble the meek and lowly Saviour, and to tread in his steps."

Alas! my brethren, I fear no such honourable description would be given of our state. Rather might we not expect our Lord, in a tone of just severity, to say; "I know

thy works, that thou hast a name, that thou livest and art dead. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come upon thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me, for they are worthy."

Were our Lord thus to come, how few would he find unreplicable in his sight! To one he would say, "Thou art cumbered about many things, but one thing is needful." To another who is immersed in dissipation, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." To the rich he would say "Trust not in uncertain riches:"—to the poor, "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life." The formal worshipper he would require to worship in spirit and in truth: the lukewarm he would charge to be zealous and repent, lest he should be utterly rejected.

It is too evident that our blessed Lord would refuse to own many who now bear his name, and would say to them, "I never knew you." He would point out the many vices which prevailed in the days of his flesh, as still demanding reformation. He would ask, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I have told you? Why are ye baptized into my name, and promise to renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, while you suffer yourselves to be enslaved by them? Why

are ye of the world, when I laid it down that the contrary spirit was the very mark of my true disciples?"

And the transformation of such persons into true disciples would be as striking now, as the change from Jews to Christians was in the primitive ages. Covetousness, dissipation, vanity, frivolity, the waste of precious time, would cease. No longer would men endeavour to serve two opposite masters. No longer would be found preposterously united a worshipper of God and of mammon. No longer would all the truths of religion be speculatively held, and yet practically denied; but a general conversion of character and change of conduct would be every where visible.

But is the personal presence of Christ necessary to produce this spirit of holiness? If we wait for that, we shall wait in vain. No other light will be vouchsafed to us than that which already shines forth, with brightness, from the Word of God; no other help than that which proceeds from the ordinary influences of his Holy Spirit. Christ has, in some sense, withdrawn himself from the world: he has left us in a state of trial, by which our hearts may be made manifest. They are his servants who take up their cross and follow him. These he will acknowledge at the last day. The world will not always appear in its present colours: there is an enchantment in it which deceives our sight, but the illusion will be one day dispelled, and then the worth of the Divine favour will be made manifest.

My brethren, let us take heed to ourselves. In the name of God, let us trifle no longer: let us delude ourselves no more. The characteristic marks of the true disciples of Christ, given us in Scripture, are clear. Let us, then, search the Scriptures, that we may fully know what manner of persons Christ and his apostles were: for we must be like them.—I conclude with repeating, once more, the words of my text: "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

SERMON XXIII.

HOW TO USE THE WORLD SO AS NOT TO ABUSE IT.

1. Cor. vii. 29—31.

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

IN compliance with the will of a former inhabitant of this parish, who, having lost a wife he affectionately loved, requested that a sermon might be preached upon the Sunday following the anniversary of her death—with the intention, probably, of giving the preacher an opportunity to moralize upon the loss of friends, and by Christian consolation, to moderate and sanctify the grief it produces—I have chosen the subject which my text presents. It teaches us at once how to enjoy our friends and domestic connexions, and how to bear

their loss; how to rejoice, and how to weep. It lays down the true Christian principle which should influence our conduct upon such occasions; a principle by the influence of which I am bold to say, that a person will be enabled both to enjoy true happiness and to glorify God, amidst all the various changes and chances of this mortal life.

Here, then, is the direction: "Let those that have wives be as though they had none; and those that weep as though they wept not; and those that rejoice as though they rejoiced not." And the reason is added which should influence us to adopt such a conduct: "For the time is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away."

I begin with remarking the wisdom of the Apostle in teaching us how to *bear the loss of friends, by first teaching us how to enjoy them*. These two points are very closely connected.—If a man has enjoyed prosperity in a proper Christian manner, he will be prepared to suffer adversity with the least degree of distress. As he will not rejoice, like one intoxicated, with an insolent and extravagant joy; so he will not be depressed by a grief that overwhelms him with intolerable anguish. All people think they know how to rejoice, though they may not know how to suffer aright: but to do this has more difficulty in it, and requires more of the Spirit of Christianity; than many may be aware. Few people bear prosperity well; and one reason is because they see no difficulty in bearing it. They do not examine themselves upon this head. They do not treasure up rules for the occasion. They do not pray to be taught how to use their happiness. In consequence of this want of a true Christian principle of rejoicing, their grief in the hour of adversity is immoderate; or at least it is restrained by such considerations as tend rather to divert our thoughts from it than to enable us to bear it. Now the excellence of Christian principle is this—that it is of universal operation. It extends its influence to all the various states and cir-

stances in which a man can be placed, and teaches us to act properly in them all. And we may depend upon it that the same causes which tend to make us bear prosperity well, will teach us also to suffer well.

On the other hand, I would remark also, that the proper use of adversity teaches us to bear prosperity aright. When we are deeply afflicted by the loss of an affectionate relative, we are so strongly impressed with the vanity of all things below, or, to use the words of the Apostle, we feel so strongly that “the fashion of this world passeth away,” that even the most careless and thoughtless acquire something of a Christian view. The imperious pressure of calamity forces upon them a measure of what they ought to have learned from the lessons of the Gospel. And thus in grief there is often found a disposition very favourable to religion; and they who have been greatly afflicted are generally able to bear prosperity in a much better spirit and temper than they possessed before they were instructed and made wise by the pressure of their affliction.

The Christian principle, then to which I have alluded as equally enabling us to bear prosperity and adversity, is *Faith*. By this we are taught to feel the vanity, the shortness, the emptiness of every thing in this world; and to realize the views of eternal things which are given us in Scripture. “The fashion of this world passeth away;” that is, this world, with all its varied appearances, its pleasures and its pains, its sorrows and its joys, passeth away quickly. The scene will soon be shifted. The time is very short. In a little while, a new order of things will arise. A great and glorious state is at hand, even an eternal state, the contemplation of which will enable us to look with a holy indifference upon all things here below. A Christian is one who looks not at the things which are seen, but at those which are unseen. He is represented as being dead to the world. His life is hid with Christ in God. He sets not his affections on things below, but on

things above, where Christ, the object of his faith and hope sitteth at the right hand of God.

But in order that this view of eternal things should have any considerable influence upon the mind, it is necessary that it should have two qualities:—1. That it should be *abiding*; 2. That it should be *pleasing*; that is, one in which our hopes are interested.

1. It should be *abiding*.—However vivid our impression of eternal things may be for a time, yet we know that such is the nature of the human mind that the very strongest impression will soon wear away if not repeated. Nay a very slight impression, frequently repeated, will have more effect upon us than any single impression however strong. Now the things of this life are perpetually before our eyes: they are ever drawing off our attention from better things, and filling our minds with the ideas of themselves: and thus they tend to exclude every other object of consideration. They are, in this respect, like a force which is constantly acting. Will not the consideration of eternal things, therefore, require to be often set before the mind, in order to counteract this force? Will it be sufficient to have had, some time ago, a vivid impression of the excellency of spiritual subjects and of the importance of the eternal world? Is there not something so congenial to our frame in the objects of sense, and so superior to our nature in those of faith, that the latter require even to be more frequently held up to view in order to make an equal impression?

From this constitution of things arises the necessity of continually hearing and reading the word of God. It is no uncommon thing for people to neglect or refuse to attend a particular preacher because, from his alleged want of capacity and information, they can expect to hear nothing but what they already know. In the same spirit they neglect to read the Bible, because they are already, as they conceive, sufficiently acquainted with its contents. Allowing this, still it must be maintained, that they ought both to hear and to read the

word of God; for it is in this way that spiritual ideas are renewed and strengthened, or at least preserved; and it is certain, that if not thus preserved, they will soon be effaced.

It is therefore of the utmost importance to keep up a lively impression of eternal things on the soul; and this cannot be done without daily retirement, meditation, and prayer. By secret prayer, an intercourse is maintained with Heaven, and the ideas of the nearness and the importance of the eternal world become familiar to our souls. But let secret prayer be neglected, and we shall soon lose the impression of Divine things; the eternal world will appear to recede from us; we shall have only an imperfect and confused idea of it as of an object almost vanishing from the sight, and in the same proportion the things of time and sense will occupy our attention and engross our thoughts.

2. But in order that the things of the eternal world may become frequently the objects of contemplation, it is absolutely necessary that the view of them should be *pleasant* to us.—No man loves to dwell upon painful or unpleasing objects: no man loves to meditate upon the shortness of life, whose prospects of happiness terminate here below. A man must therefore have a good hope beyond the grave, before he can accustom himself to extend his view to this close of his earthly hopes. Whoever dreads death will not often present the image of it to his mind. He that is afraid of God will not often meditate upon his power and his omnipresence.

Now it is the business of the Gospel, and of the Gospel alone, to render the thoughts of death, of eternity, and of God, pleasing to the soul. Christ is there held up to our view as having made atonement for our sins and procured reconciliation with the Father, in order that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.” They that come to Christ are represented as justified, as accepted, as adopted into God’s family. Christ is spoken of as their Brother, for he was partaker of their flesh. Christ is their Advocate:

he has ascended up into heaven to plead for them, and to prepare a place for them. Hence the believer triumphs over death and the grave, because God hath given him the victory over them through Jesus Christ. Hence the eternal world is no longer the object of his dread; for it is the kingdom of Christ in which *he* dwells and presides. Hence his affections are set upon things above; for they are placed where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

Thus, in all things, we find that Christ is the Centre and the Source of true religion. It is in Him that we obtain just and pleasing views of the eternal world. It is by the knowledge of Him that we obtain that spiritual-mindedness and those affections which render the eternal world the object of our frequent and delightful meditation.

But it will be asked, What has the consideration of the next world to do with our concerns in this? I answer, Much. The proper use of this world depends wholly upon our views of that which is to come. This is the argument of the Apostle: he teaches us, in our relations in life, in our afflictions, in our enjoyments, in our worldly employments and concerns, to act as those who consider this life only in reference to another. We are to act as those that look beyond this world. But this precept we cannot fulfil, unless our views of the world to come be strongly impressed upon our mind. Now they cannot be strongly impressed, unless they are frequent;—they will not be frequent, unless they are delightful;—and they will not be delightful, unless they are seen through Jesus Christ. Thus Christ is the Alpha and Omega. He is the Source of that principle which diffuses itself through the life of a Christian, and regulates all his conduct in the things relating both to this life and to that which is to come.

II. This principle, then, rightly felt, will teach us how to use the world without abusing it; how to enjoy the society of our nearest connexions, and how to sorrow in their loss.

In the enjoyment of domestic relations, the rule laid down, "Let those who have wives be as though they had none," is not to be understood as if it excluded the gratification of social feelings, the pleasures of tenderness, or the indulgence of domestic happiness. The religion of Christ is not like the philosophy of the Stoics, who refused themselves indulgence in order that they might not be afflicted by its loss. Thus they might not endure pain, they deprived themselves of pleasure. Such is not the Christian scheme. It allows us, it enjoins us, to receive the bounties of our heavenly Father with pleasure and thanksgiving; to enjoy them for the Lord's sake, the liberal and kind donor of them all.—"A good wife is from the Lord." We are exhorted to rejoice in the wife of our youth. We are required to love our wives even as our own selves. We are to look round upon our domestic comforts, and with hearts filled with gratitude, to acknowledge in them the goodness of God, and to enjoy them with thanksgiving to him. But how, then, are we to be preserved from worldliness of mind, and from misery when we are deprived of our comforts? I answer, by the principle already laid down: by a deep and abiding impression of the superiority of things spiritual and eternal. In this respect, they that have wives will be as though they had none; that is, in comparison of the happiness ready to be revealed, all that is enjoyed in this line should appear to us as but a drop in the ocean: the addition of it should appear to us as nothing, and the removal of it should appear to be equally unimportant, when compared with the great things which God has laid up for them that love him. We should look to God, while we adore him for having made our cup run over with blessings, and say, "These temporal mercies, O Lord, and all I enjoy, I enjoy from thy mercy and bounty. But these are but the smallest part of thy goodness; these are but as the drops which precede the shower. In the gift of thy beloved Son, and eternal life through him, I behold the infinite extent of Divine goodness. While,

therefore, I value these temporal blessings, O let me value, in an infinitely higher degree, spiritual and eternal ones! Give me just conceptions to understand the relative value of thy several gifts, and to prize them accordingly. The things which accompany salvation, be these the objects of my hope and joy. These are divine; these perish not with the using; these are eternal; these are worthy of an immortal soul to enjoy, and worthy of God to bestow. Let me, therefore, while I enjoy all my domestic and temporal comforts with pleasure, and with additional pleasure because I receive them from thee; let me still consider them as subordinate and inferior to the blessings which Christ has purchased. While I have them let me consider well their nature: they are transitory and vain; let the chief desire of my soul, therefore, be towards those things that are above."

My brethren, are such our views of happiness? Are our prayers to God of this description? Do we preserve this moderation in our enjoyment of temporal happiness? Do we consider well, not only what a fleeting and brittle thing it is, but also how inferior to that which is enjoyed in Christ? Are we, therefore, watching over ourselves with a godly suspicion? Are we afraid and jealous lest transitory and worldly things should, from their being congenial to our nature, make too deep an impression on our minds, and acquire too high a value in our esteem? Are we endeavouring to have our enjoyment of the world sanctified to us? We shall then know the meaning of the Apostle, for we shall enter into his feelings, when he says, "The time is short. Let those who have wives be as though they had none; and those who weep as though they wept not, and those who use this world as they that used it not, for the fashion of it passeth away." We shall know, I say, what he means: for we shall know how the blessings of this world can be enjoyed as the gift of God, and, therefore, not to be despised; but at the same time as a snare to our souls, and therefore to be used with

caution: as fleeting, and, therefore, not to be over-valued; as nothing in comparison of eternity, and therefore not to hold the first place in our esteem.

Apply the same principle to the losses we must expect to meet with in life. There are many ways by which the men of the world bear up against the crosses they have to endure in it. Sometimes *selfishness* helps them; they love their own happiness too much to allow their misfortunes to trouble them. Sometimes the necessity of bearing what they cannot help, will endue them with a resemblance of patience, or rather of insensibility. Others trust to time and the diversion of their thoughts and the fixing of their attention upon some new object of pursuit. But these are not the Christian modes of bearing calamities. A Christian weeps, but it is as though he wept not; for he feels that the time is short. He sets eternity before him. He compares what he has lost, with the blessings he enjoys and hopes for in Christ. And though he feels and weeps, yet it is like one who has only lost what he expected to lose, and what is trivial in comparison of the superior blessings he enjoys.

You see, my brethren, the value of the Gospel. It is intended to be our remedy against the calamities of life. Prayer, therefore, and devout meditation, instead of rendering us gloomy and miserable, as many erroneously imagine, are intended by him who best knows what is the life of man, to shield us from the ills of life, and to endue us with solid and abiding consolation.

Let me address your feelings. You know that you hold all your temporal enjoyments by a precarious tenure. You that have wives, and in them all that gives enjoyment to life, consider how soon the stroke of death may tear them from you.—You that have children, and whose hopes of happiness are fondly wrapped up in them, remember how they may prove a parent's curse instead of his blessing. You that are buying and increasing your possessions, and you that are

using the world in all the eagerness and hope of possessing in it complete happiness, know that the time is short, and that the fashion of the world passeth away. Hear, I beseech you, the warning voice of your Creator, anxious to secure your happiness, by taking off your expectations from a false foundation, to build them upon one that is safe and solid. He bids you to rejoice, under the deep impression of the superior value of eternal things. He does not forbid you to weep, but he tells you to weep as though you wept not; considering how trifling your loss is, compared with the blessings which perish not with the using.

I know, indeed, that nature still fondly cleaves to the world, and the things of it, as the only source of joy. I know how backward the heart ever is to receive the testimony of God while it contradicts our present experience. I am aware of the difficulty of overcoming sense by the views of faith. But let the multitudes of those who suffer in extreme anguish, and of those whose sufferings are too acute for nature to survive, teach those whom the word of God instructs in vain. Let them see what is the lot of man, and what may be their lot. Now they may be flourishing in health and strength, blooming in honour and wealth. But did you never see the tree full of blossoms stripped at once and blasted by a sudden blight! So are the youthful sometimes struck: so are the proud and mighty often brought down. I wish only that you should have, in the hour of calamity, such a resource, that, with Job, you may say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." I want you only to receive the stroke with patient submission, and to say, "I thank God, I sorrow not as those that have no hope." Would to God those whose tears are their meat day and night, might know that there is a way of weeping as though they wept not, of bearing sorrow without being overcome by it. The knowledge of eternal things in and through Christ can give you this. In vain will you seek it from philoso-

phy. It is to be found only in Christ, and in communion with him. His peace is such as the world can neither give nor take away. Let me, then, my brethren, exhort you all; for you are all liable to sufferings; let me especially exhort you who are under the stroke of affliction or the pressure of poverty, to embrace that Gospel which the beloved Son of God came down from heaven to make known to man. Let me persuade you to seek acquaintance with God by faith and by prayer. So will you be able to glory in tribulations. So will you rejoice with a joy unspeakable; while, amidst all the troubles of life, you look for and hasten unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with him of perfect felicity.

END OF VOLUME TWO.

SERMONS

BY THE

REV. JOHN VENN, M. A.

Sermons

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REV. JOHN VENN, M. A.

RECTOR OF CLAPHAM.

THREE VOLUMES IN TWO.

VOL. III.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE THIRD LONDON EDITION.

BOSTON.

PUBLISHED BY R. P. & C. WILLIAMS.

1822.

SERMON I.

ON THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

2. Cor. v. 11.

Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

DIFFERENT ages of the world have had their different errors and vices. In a former age, superstition was the reigning evil: in the present, profaneness and infidelity predominate. During the prevalence of superstition, erroneous conceptions were formed of the character of God, as a Being strict in exacting the performance of rites and ceremonies, rigid in his laws, and severe in enforcing penances. The present age has gone into the opposite extreme:—it has abandoned the ideas of justice and vengeance in the Divine nature, not considering God as a Judge who will render to every man according to his works, punishing the sinner with everlasting destruction; but rather as a tender Father, excusing the frailties of his children, and chastening and disciplining them here, in order to make them all finally happy hereafter. He is, according to the

popular notion, a God all mercy and love, incapable of anger or resentment; and though himself perfectly holy and pure, yet so indulgent to the frailty of his creatures as not to observe, with any vigilant attention, what is done amiss by them. Now as our religion always takes its character from the views we entertain of the Divine Being, so, in consequence of the change I have noticed, the form and complexion of religion amongst us has undergone a remarkable alteration. In the age of Superstition, ceremonial observances were multiplied; abundant charities were offered as commutations for sin, and severe penances and mortification were voluntarily endured as an atonement for it. Although the real nature of religion was entirely mistaken, yet the forms, however erroneous, under which it appeared, were universally prevalent. Pilgrimages were made, monasteries were built, and churches and masses were multiplied. For a short period after the Reformation, just and true ideas of the character of God prevailed among the Protestant churches; and a proper fear of his Name, and reverence for his authority, were united to the love of him as a Parent. But afterwards, infidels and professed Christians, led astray by a philosophizing spirit, succeeded in very generally establishing what they termed a more liberal notion of the character of God, and in subverting the faith of mankind in his retributive justice. The effect was, as they wished, to relax, in popular opinion, the obligations to holiness. The violation of the Divine Law was considered as a slight evil; the necessity of deep repentance and contrition for sin was superseded; the salutary dread of the judgments of God was ridiculed; the doctrine of the atonement was undermined; faith in Christ was degraded from the high rank it had hitherto held in the estimation of Christians; instead of a just distribution of rewards and punishments, the universal salvation of mankind was anticipated; and Christianity itself was reduced nearly to a level with natural religion. The standard of morals, was of course, lowered.

Christian vigilance, self-denial, and separation from the world were derided as superstitious. Vices were called by extenuating names, and the law of nature substituted for that of the Gospel. Hence a life of careless dissipation and pleasure came to be considered as a life of innocence and virtue.

That there is now a more general degree of profligacy and corruption of manners than prevailed a century or two ago, will probably not be denied; though it may be allowed that, in some respects, the present age has improved above those which preceded it. I would not ascribe this degeneracy of manners entirely to a mistaken view of the Divine nature, because I consider that error as partly its cause and partly its effect. False ideas of the Deity will necessarily produce a low state of morals; and a low state of morals will naturally occasion inadequate conceptions of the holiness of God. But of this I am well persuaded, that satan, the grand enemy of Christianity and godliness, could in no way so secretly and so successfully undermine both, as by substituting what might be conceived to be more honourable and liberal ideas of the Divine mercy, in the room of those awful views of his justice which the Scripture has represented to us. The promotion of the glory of God is thus made to coincide with the indulgence of the corrupt propensities of men; we are taught at once to violate the commands of God, and to allay our fears by the remembrance of his mercy. Religion itself is made the instrument of stifling the remonstrances of conscience; and even our knowledge of the Divine nature is employed to diminish our dread of sin.

I do not in this place address myself, on the subject of the Divine justice, to infidels. The arguments I wish to use are derived from the Scriptures, the authority of which they reject; yet even they, reasoning on the ground of mere natural religion, will be much perplexed to reconcile the moral constitution of the world with the views they entertain of the Divine nature.

The indulgent lenity they ascribe to God can never be shown to be consistent with the awful visitations with which he often chastises the offences of man, unless they represent him as capricious and vindictive, as "such an one as themselves." My business, however, lies with professed Christians, who acknowledge their obligation to receive the views which Revelation gives of the Divine nature. Yet many of these, inadvertently it may be hoped, have imbibed what is termed a philosophical idea of the mercy of God: and finding the convenience of that opinion in the indulgence which it affords them, attempt to reconcile it with the representation given in Scripture of his character.

I do not suppose that the generality of such persons are very strict and accurate in their examination of Scripture: loose and superficial views are better suited to their state of mind. It may happen, however, that some more acute and ingenious person amongst them may display his critical ingenuity by a laboured attempt to explain away the plain and obvious language of the Bible. With such persons, however, I do not here wish to reason. They who neglect, or they who pervert, Scripture, equally shew dispositions unprepared to receive the truth. Of you, my brethren, I would hope, that you are deeply sensible of the importance of truth; that you earnestly wish to ascertain the exact views of Scripture; that you are prepossessed by no system, and have no prejudice in favour of your own notions of the character of God, but will receive, with "an honest and good heart," whatever you find declared respecting it in the Sacred Writings. It is this humble and teachable disposition alone which the Holy Ghost will bless with wisdom and knowledge: "the meek will he guide in judgment."

I will suppose, therefore, that some of those before me have inadvertently imbibed what they conceive to be honourable ideas of the Divine nature, and hope, though they own they have not well examined the question, that their opinions may in some way be reconciled

with the declarations of Scripture. I shall suggest, then, to your consideration some brief remarks on the character of God, as displayed by the Sacred Writers.

1. Let me call your attention to the history of the Fall.—In what light does it exhibit *God*? As a Being very indulgent to the frailties of his creatures? Adam sinned once, by violating his commands; and mark what was his punishment: he was driven at once from paradise; he became immediately mortal. But the effect of the Divine displeasure did not stop there. The whole earth was cursed for his sake. All his posterity were involved in his punishment: misery and sorrow, and death, became their inevitable portion, and have continued to be so from generation to generation. Now this was the very *first* transgression of man, and therefore it calls for our particular notice. It was to be expected that God would display to his creatures his own views of sin, by the manner in which he visited their first offence against him. And this lesson we may usefully learn: we see a punishment inflicted, which endured through almost numberless years; we see that punishment, in many respects, very severe, and not to be averted by repentance, but going down with man to the grave; and, what is most remarkable, extending to all the Sons of Adam, to endless generations, who had not been partakers of his crime. Now I would ask you whether this earliest fact which we know respecting God, and sin against him, exhibits him as so indifferent to the transgression of his law, so indulgent to the frailty of his creatures, so merciful and forgiving as you, perhaps, have imagined him to be? On the other hand, if God would have impressed his creatures with a dread of his justice, by a punishment which every man living should feel, of which he should carry about him daily the affecting proof, what course could he have taken better calculated to produce this effect? This was a fact for a world to contemplate;—a durable monument to be read by ages yet unborn;—a lesson to be repeated to them at the hour when the heart was most

impressible, when they stood by the bedside of an expiring friend, or watched with a heart torn with anguish, the lingering departure of a beloved child; or when they felt themselves struck and wounded by the arrows of death. Then would be forcibly felt the awful truth, that God is a just and holy God, the avenger of sin—that “the wages of sin is death.”

I am well aware, how ingenious men have tried to evade the force of this proof, by representing death as even a blessing to mankind. It may be so, indeed, if considered as the necessary introduction to a better state of existence; but whether death *itself* is a blessing, let nature which shrinks from it, declare. The evils of life may so multiply upon us that we may welcome death at last as a refuge from them; but let us still remember, that those evils equally prove the reality of the curse. They are as it were the sad forerunners of our dissolution; and the very indifference to life which they produce is itself a species of death the most painful and affecting, when existence becomes a burden and annihilation is preferred to life.

2. But I pass on to another fact, which equally shews the terrors which surround the Divine Nature: it is a fact equally extraordinary and impressive: I mean; the general destruction of mankind by the flood. Behold the heavens clothed with blackness; the light of day totally hid by the accumulating clouds which every hour become darker and more heavy; the awful artillery of the skies rending the air with the most tremendous sounds, and appalling with consternation the multitudes of mankind, who hitherto had conceived of God as too merciful to execute his threatened purposes! I would place you in view of this scene; I would shew you the agony painted in every countenance, the child clinging to its mother, and the wife to the husband, in unutterable dread and confusion: you should observe the gradual rising of the waters, mark the shaking of the earth, and trace the vain endeavours of its inhabitants to hide themselves from the swift approaching

destruction: then I would ask, are there no terrors in the Lord? Do you see nothing but smiles of love and kindness in his countenance toward his creatures? Correct your error: own that the Lord is dreadful in wrath as well as in power, and bow before him and tremble.

3. But I would conduct you to other striking instances of his vengeance against sin. I do not notice the cases of individuals: I take instances upon the largest scale, where a nation or a world suffers under the frown of the Almighty. I would request you then to observe the dealings of God with the Jews. They were a nation selected by him from the mass of mankind, that in their history he might exhibit to the whole world a spectacle of the laws by which he acts, and might teach his creatures the attributes of his nature. They were to be his witnesses, read and known by all men. Now what do you find in their history, which countenances those vague and indefinite notions of Divine mercy which are inconsistent with justice or vengeance? To my own mind it chiefly exhibits a display of Divine justice and hatred of sin. It is the record of Divine judgment. You see the people of God, indeed, brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand and stretched-out arm; but they are surrounded on every side by the awful marks of vengeance against sin, plaguing the Egyptians, and at length destroying them in the Red Sea. Accompany them into the wilderness: there God reveals himself, and gives the Law upon Mount Horeb. But, behold, the mount burns with fire, and the terrors of the Lord are so awful that even Moses fears and quakes. Pass along with them to the promised land; what alarming instances do you behold of the punishment of sin! Fiery serpents destroying the people; the pestilence raging, and carrying off thousands in a day; the earth opening her mouth, and swallowing up the guilty in a moment! You shudder at the view, and long to finish the forty years of painful sojourning, and to accompany them into the land of promise. But ere you enter, behold

Moses, the faithful servant of the Lord, even for one transgression, must not be permitted to pass over Jordan: he may see with his eyes the good land, and must then retire to die, as an awful proof of the jealousy of God. The children of Israel, however, pass into the land of Canaan; but their entry is marked by scenes of desolation. The guilt of the Amorites was full, and God sends his own people in a land wet with the blood of the inhabitants, whose sins he was so awfully visiting.—And now observe the state of the Israelites, the promised seed: for four hundred years they themselves are harassed and vexed by the Philistines, because they were disobedient to their God, who sold them into the hands of their enemies.” At length David arises and delivers them, and establishes his kingdom in power. It is, however, but a short interval of peace which they enjoy. Soon, according to the prediction of the Prophets, they are carried captive to Babylon, and for seventy years their land is left to lie desolate, on account of the neglect of the Sabbaths and the appointed ordinances of Jehovah.—But I hasten on to the conclusion of their history. They reject the promised Messiah; and from that day to the present, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have become outcasts upon the face of the earth; without a country or a city to dwell in; without a king to rule over them, or a temple in which to worship. Well might Moses say to them, “Beware! your God is a jealous God.”

And now sum up the whole of their history, and see if you can give to it any other interpretation than that it is a display of the holiness and justice of God, “by no means clearing the guilty.”

There are two other great events to which I must request your attention.

4. See the illustrious Person who hangs suspended upon the cross—a spectacle at which the sun grows dark, and earth shakes, and the tombs are open! See there the Son of God, giving himself up to be a victim

of death, a propitiation for sin, a sacrifice to His justice! Here reflect a moment upon the views which the Divine Being must have entertained of sin, when he thought it necessary that such a sacrifice should be offered ere pardon was granted even to repenting sinners. Upon your system, there was no occasion for such an atonement: according to your views of the Divine nature, it was an easy thing for God to pardon sin; it was even a delight to him and the perfection of his nature to display unbounded mercy and goodness. But how is this fact to be reconciled with your theory? Upon that system, indeed, which ascribes perfect holiness and the most awful vengeance to God, it is natural and easily accounted for: it is in unison with that supposition; on any other, it is inexplicable.

5. But accompany me yet further: we will travel by a short anticipation to the end of the journey of life. Behold the rising dead! See the millions of mankind assembling; and behold the angels separating them, and the Judge of all, with a frown, commanding the wicked to depart from him into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels! Do you see in this awful scene any marks of that tenderness which cannot punish, that mercy which always spares? No: the wicked are banished for ever: their memory is forgotten; they are shut up in everlasting fire, where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched:

Put together all these facts: whatever might be thought of any one of them singly, it is upon their harmony, their coincidence with each other, that the argument depends. There is an awful correspondence between them, which clearly indicates the same plain design and the same Author; and, added together, they establish the fact, that God has his terrors as well as his mercies, and that his justice is as conspicuous as his love.

Hitherto I have spoken only of *facts*: but from the history of God's dealings with mankind we must now turn our attention to his express declaration: Now

from the first chapter of the Word of God to the close of the sacred canon, its language is in perfect unison with the facts I have adduced. God is every where represented as a holy and jealous God, who designs, by his Word, to awaken in our minds a dread of his displeasure, and a deep sense of the necessity of strict obedience to his law. It is impossible, in the short time limited for me, to make long quotations from Scripture; and indeed it is unnecessary; for they must be very ignorant of the Bible who are unable readily to refer to such passages. The prophets were inspired by God to exhibit just views of his character; and they so repeatedly, so awfully, and so fully denounce his wrath against sin, that their prophecies express almost continually threatenings and woe. The writers of the Psalms mingle, with the most delightful representations of the love of God, the most awful view of his justice and punishment of sinners. Our Lord delivered some of the most alarming declarations respecting the doom of the wicked, and the indignation of God against sin. His Apostles, though eminently the heralds of glad tidings, yet sanction also, in the most positive terms, all that the Prophets had said concerning the judgments of God.

But it is not only the positive language of the Prophets and Apostles, which declares the justice of the Lord; a perpetual acknowledgment of it is interwoven into the very frame and contexture of the Jewish religious service. It was a form of worship strongly expressive of the state of man as a sinner. It seemed to consist almost entirely of expiation. The blood of victims, at almost every hour, was streaming upon the altars of Jehovah; men were always appearing before God as a just and angry God, and appeasing him by sacrifice. In unison with this system, the Christian dispensation teaches us to prostrate ourselves before God in the name of Christ, and to approach the Most High, confessing our guilt, and deprecating Divine justice, for the sake of the great Atonement. It is not,

therefore, upon any single declaration of the eternity of Divine punishment that we rest the proof of this doctrine; nor upon the expressions of any one Prophet or Apostle; nor even upon the concurrent testimony of them all;—we appeal to the harmony of the whole Revelation of God, to the correspondence of inspired testimony with authenticated facts, to the connexion of the whole with the system of worship which God has enjoined, and even with that highest and clearest dispensation of mercy which he has given to man. This accumulated evidence becomes irresistible. Declarations might be limited; arguments might be distorted; but proofs thus combined are subject to no ambiguity: their application is universal, and their force can not be evaded.

“Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”

And first I call on the careless sinner to pause and tremble at this view of the character of God.

I probably speak to some who are living in the daily violation of God’s commands. You know, for I speak to your consciences; you know that you are habitual sinners, and that you have not repented, and do not repent;—yet you presumptuously hope that God will be merciful to you, and will not destroy the work of his own hands. You have been told perhaps, and you eagerly catch at the delusive report, that God is very merciful, and did not make man to destroy him. But will you believe his own declarations? They are clear and plain, that no drunkard, no whoremonger or unclean person—in a word, no sinner remaining such—shall ever be admitted into the kingdom of God. Will you credit the testimony of facts? They are equally decisive. Look at the old world deluged by a flood. They could not believe that God would destroy his own works, till the flood came and swept them all away. Have you considered that the Bible must be shewn to be false, before you can hope to be saved? Dreadful alternative! Why will you put your salvation to such

hazard? Why will you compel the Almighty to condemn you? Behold, he sent his Son to save you; and you will not hear him, nor receive his salvation. By the terrors of the Lord, I entreat you to consider how dreadful must be the wrath of the Almighty. Be not deceived by vain imaginations. You know nothing of God but what his word has declared; and there you learn that he sees with abhorrence and that he will visit by correction or punishment, every act of wilful disobedience.

Be careful, therefore, to avoid temptation. Impress your mind with a salutary dread of God's displeasure. This is the best safeguard of virtue, and is by no means inconsistent with the most fervent love to God. The most dutiful and affectionate son will be most afraid of his father's anger.—Learn also to prize that atonement which God has given you in his beloved Son. You cannot love God too much, nor feel too high a sense of your obligation to him. Shew then, by your obedience to his law, and by your fear of sin, how much you love him, and how highly you value his approbation.

Lastly, let us learn to guard against those systems, whether philosophical or religious, which would in any wise diminish our dread of sin, or lead us to look upon it without horror. The true test of the excellence of any system should be the holy jealousy of sin which it produces, and the watchfulness it inspires against its approach. Such is evidently the main design of Revelation. It displays, in the strongest light, the evil of sin; and cherishes in us such a dread of it that we may be better fitted to dwell in that world where obedience to God is pure, and perfect, and uninterrupted.

SERMON II.

ON THE PARENTAL CHARACTER OF GOD

Deut. xxxii. 6.

Is not he thy Father?

THE term Father implies all that is most tender and affectionate. The love of a Father is immeasurable. It extends to every thing which can affect the welfare of his offspring: it leads him to anticipate all the dangers to which his child is exposed, that he may guard against them; all the inconveniences to which it may be subject, that he may remove them; all its wants, ere yet they are felt, that he may supply them; all the advantages, comforts, and blessings which he can procure for his offspring, that he may obtain them. By day he labours for his child; by night he watches for him; and often are his eyes kept waking upon his bed while the welfare of his unconscious child is the subject of his anxious care.

His love is also unchangeable. The want of a suitable return will not extinguish it: sickness, infirmity, calamity, will not damp it: the disappointment of all

his hopes will not destroy it: time itself will not efface it. To the very last beat of the pulse, amidst all the languor of sickness, or even the pain of dying, under every circumstance which chills or suppresses the affection of others, a father feels the welfare of his child dearer to him than his own. It is true indeed that the love of a parent, like every thing else in this fallen world, partakes of the imperfections which cleave to human nature. Other passions may disturb its influence: the breast in which it resides may be unpropitious to its full development; folly and sin, the bane of every thing good, may poison its very sources; but the proper tendency of parental regard is what I have stated, and its general character such as I have described. For my own part, ever since I could form any observation of the human character, I have been accustomed to associate with the name of Father all that is venerable, tender, and affectionate. Many years have now passed since I could call any one by that endearing appellation; but no course of time will ever obliterate the memory of that unvarying kindness, that incessant solicitude, that perpetual watchfulness, that affectionate sympathy in my trouble, that abounding joy in my happiness, which for so many years I daily witnessed. I appeal for the truth of my representation of parental love to the oldest persons here present. I ask them whether, after the revolution of perhaps half a century, the impression of parental tenderness does not still remain indelible, whether memory does not upon this summons instantly call up innumerable proofs of kindness, which cause the heart to dissolve in grateful recollection. I appeal to the feelings of every parent in this numerous assembly, and ask them if the description I have given of a father's heart be not correct. They know with what anxiety they watch over their offspring, how incessant their cares, how unvarying regard; how much they live in the welfare of their children. I appeal to you who still enjoy the privilege of having a parent, if you do not daily witness such

proofs of regard and solicitude for your welfare as will justify the representation which I have made. It is true that the painful, though necessary, restraints which are imposed upon you by parental authority, may check those feelings of grateful affection which else would force themselves upon your minds. You think you may complain of hardships which you perhaps sustain; but that very complaint originates in the high conception which you have justly formed of parental tenderness, and which you may conceive not to be realized in your particular case. But allow me to observe, that you perhaps are at present very inadequate judges of the wisdom with which the cares of a parent are exerted. The time may arrive when you will be better qualified, from experience, to form a correct judgment of the proper effects of a well-regulated affection. And then you will probably observe, even in the restraints to which parental authority may have subjected you, solid and substantial proofs of the most tender regard.

Parental affection is implanted in the breast by the Author of our frame, for the protection and benefit of our offspring. It is not left to reason to shew its necessity, nor to conscience to urge the observance of it; but it is interwoven in the frame of man, and begins to influence his conduct as soon as its operation is necessary. Being thus implanted in us, it is cherished, by the dependent state of children, who know no other protectors but their parents, and have no house but theirs in which to find an habitation. But God has further strengthened the bonds of parental regard by the firmest ties of moral and religious duty. In savage nations, its force is felt with irresistible strength through the mere instinct of nature; but in more polished societies, it is still further enforced by the obligations of reason and religion, law and equity, honour and conscience;—so important is it justly considered, so reproachful is the want of it esteemed, both by God and man.

But it is not my design in this discourse to shew the strength of parental tenderness, to enforce the practice of it, or to urge upon children the necessity of filial obedience. Great as these objects are, I have an end in view even higher and more important than these. I would call forth the warmest filial feelings of you that are children in this assembly: I would excite all your gratitude, your confidence, your love, and, without any diminution of your regard to an earthly parent, direct you to transfer them to him who is indeed our Father, the best as he is the greatest object of affection. Oh that you knew and loved him as you honour and love that tender earthly parent who derives all his regard for you from the care and providence of your heavenly Father! I would excite in you, ye parents! all that love and tenderness (not difficult to be excited) which dwell in your bosoms towards your beloved children; and whilst your hearts glow with affection, and the most fervent desires for their welfare, I would say to you, Behold in those feelings the just emblem of that solicitude for the welfare of man, which dwells in the Divine breast. Yes, my brethren; we all have a Father whom we have not yet seen, but whose eyes have ever been upon us to protect and bless us; whose hand has held up our infant steps, and guarded and defended us from innumerable dangers; whose bounty has fed us and enriched us with every blessing which we have enjoyed, from the moment of our birth to the present hour: whose mercies surround us on every side, so that we can direct our eyes to no point but we behold them: we can look back to no period but we remember them; we cannot turn our view into futurity but we anticipate them. It is my desire to set before you this best and most gracious of Beings, in his mild, paternal character, that you may feel towards him the gratitude and love and confidence which you ought ever to entertain. And O! that God, who has given us so high and distinguishing a privilege above the lower orders of creatures, an understanding capa-

ble of knowing him and of reposing in perfect confidence under his benignant government; O! that he may help us in this our design, that we may all feel towards him the sentiments of veneration, love, and gratitude by which all his creatures ought to be animated, and which are in fact continually felt by all those holy and perfect beings who dwell with him in glory!

My brethren, is not God your Father? Did not he create you? Did not he contrive for your use the eyes by which you behold with such delight the various objects around you? Did not he form with exquisite skill the ear by which sounds are conveyed to your minds, organs whose nicety of construction it exceeds the ingenuity of man adequately to comprehend? Was it not his wisdom which fashioned your limbs, endued the will with power to use the muscles, caused the heart to beat, propelling the current of blood through all the infinite channels of its course, and endued the brain with vital energy? Has not his power and wisdom provided organs wonderfully calculated to digest the food, to form from it a thousand different liquids, necessary for the existence and comfort of the frame? Have you not derived from his care and bounty the rich endowments of the mind; the imagination able to penetrate through every space, to travel in an instant through every distance; to deck every object with the most brilliant colours; the memory to recal distant occurrences, and place them as present before the mind; the judgment to compare and separate; the will to choose and determine? Are any of these faculties which so distinguish and adorn man created by yourself? Are you indebted for them to the care and kindness of your earthly parents? Are they not all designed, contrived, provided, and given to you by him who is the Source of all good? Is not he then, in the proper, in the fullest sense of the word, your Father? Was it not he, who, having created you, committed you to the charge of your earthly parents, and disposed their minds to love you, to nurse your infancy with fondness, and to watch

with unceasing care over your welfare? Is it not, therefore, in a secondary sense only that we are to ascribe the term of Father to our earthly parent, while the primary and full meaning of the word belongs only to our Creator? Let us, my brethren, know our true state, let us understand our high dignity and noble birth. Let us remember, that in having God for our Father, we possess the highest honour and the noblest privilege which any created beings can enjoy.

But, secondly, there is another sense in which the title of Father is justly claimed by God. He is the Father who hath bought us. When man, by his rebellion against his Maker, had forfeited the title of a son, it pleased God to provide an atonement for him. Through the sacrifice of our Redeemer, God offered to restore his offending children in the most ample manner, to the privileges which they had lost; and as the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to become, in a still higher sense than before, our Father also. He would be justly considered as acting towards us the part of a parent, and as deserving all our filial confidence and gratitude, who, after our temporal death, should bestow on us a second life, who should deliver us from ruin and decay, and place us in a new and happy state of existence. With what reason then ought we to call him our Father, who has, by the death of his Son, redeemed us from eternal death, and rendered us capable of enjoying eternal happiness and glory? In this sense, our blessed Lord has taught us to look up to God as our Father: "I ascend," says he, "unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." And indeed the New Testament, in every page, exhibits to us this delightful view of our Creator. It continually teaches us to look to him as a reconciled Father in Jesus Christ. It speaks of the spirit of adoption sent into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, teaching us, that is, to draw near to God with humble boldness, through Christ, as to a Father, and to repose in him all filial confidence.

When I have reflected upon the numerous and signal proofs which God has given of his paternal feelings towards us, I have often been surprised that those whose gratitude to their earthly parents is unbounded, and whose confidence in them never fails, should shew so little affection to their heavenly Father, and rely so little on his love and mercy. The reasons of this inconsistency appear to me to be the following.

First, the undue attachment which we are apt to place on objects of sense. We see and converse with an earthly parent, but our bodily senses do not inform us of the presence of God. Yet the proofs of his presence are actually more strong and numerous than those which attest the existence of any material object; and all the blessings which we have ever enjoyed concur to prove, that it is as a Father that he is present with us to protect us and to do us good.

Secondly, Through the weakness of the human understanding we continually entertain an undue estimation of second causes. We do not feel the extent of our obligations to our heavenly Father, because many of the blessings which he bestows are communicated to us by some instrument appointed for that end. Now we should esteem it a strange degree of absurd reasoning, if a poor man, to whom we sent our bounty by an agent, were to express no gratitude to us, but much to the person whom we might employ. Yet we all reason too frequently in this manner with respect to the great Author of all good. What we obtain through the kindness of our parents, we attribute solely to them, not considering who has induced their minds to feel towards us that parental tenderness. What we procure through our own labour we ascribe to ourselves, not reflecting that it is in this way that God inclines and enables us to obtain the good he bestows upon us. Could we withdraw the veil which is interposed between us and the Divine Being, we should clearly see that there is not a blessing which we enjoy which has not been given to us by the provident

and watchful beneficence of God, and that men have been only the instruments of his bounty. But there is in our hearts a reluctance to set God before us. We know enough of his majesty to shrink from his presence; enough of his holiness to be afraid of his inspection; enough of his justice to tremble at our guilt. We do not like therefore to retain him in our knowledge. He is a Being whom we consider as too great to be connected with us but as our Lawgiver and our Judge, and therefore we rather turn our attention from him. But Revelation is given to rectify this false estimate of the Divine character. It displays the goodness of God as well as his justice: it represents him as our Father, as well as our Judge: it beseeches us to lay aside our dread of him and our enmity towards him. Now then, "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

It is to this state of reconciliation with God to which, by the help of his Holy Spirit, I would wish to guide you. I would cause all his goodness to pass before you. I would proclaim to you his Name, as he himself proclaimed it to Moses: "The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." I would set before you such a display of the Divine goodness and love that your hearts should be drawn to him by the cords of affection, and that from henceforth you might give up to him your bodies and souls as a lively and reasonable sacrifice.

It will probably, however, be generally acknowledged, that the character of God is good and gracious. This degree of acquaintance with his nature is easily attained. It is in the practical use of such knowledge that we are chiefly apt to fail. This is therefore the end to which I now shall direct your attention. I will suppose you

then to allow, that God is love; that his mercy and goodness are infinite; that his bounty is inexhaustible; that the gift of his Son to be our Redeemer proves, beyond contradiction, his thoughts of mercy to be as far above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth; that he is continually doing us good, using his infinite power only for that purpose; that, in a word, he is in the highest sense of the expression our Father:—what then ought to be your thoughts and conduct towards him?

1. In the first place, you ought to entertain the highest reverence for his laws.—The commands of a Father should justly be esteemed sacred; because they are given by him, and because they can only be dictated by love to his children. If you were to see a parent most kind and benevolent in his nature, and peculiarly affectionate towards his son, would you suppose it possible that in the precepts he gave to him he could have any end in view but his welfare? Would not every exhortation bear the stamp and character of kindness and love? Such is the system of laws given to you by God. Whenever you open the Bible consider it in this light: My heavenly Father, ever wise and attentive to my good, has given me this book, as a token of his care and tenderness, to point out to me the paths of peace and eternal happiness. There is not a single precept in this volume which does not flow from the purest kindness and the deepest affection, directed by the clearest wisdom. How shall I then receive it? Shall I not value it as my counsellor and guide? Shall I not cheerfully and readily make every sacrifice which it requires? Shall I not read it constantly as containing the will of my heavenly Father? Such, it is evident, must be the disposition and views of those who consider God as their Parent and their Friend.

2. This view of the character of God as our Father should teach us to form a just idea of the true nature of religion! Religion! with what terror has it

been beheld! How has it been considered as a system of restraint and gloom; of penances and mortifications, enjoining the most irksome labours, and threatening dreadful punishments if its conditions were not fulfilled. Allow me, from the preceeding considerations, to suggest a juster view of its nature.

Religion is the homage which you pay to your heavenly Father, by offering to him the worship of the heart and asking of him the most valuable blessings. It is the regulation of your lives by his holy word. It is the enjoyment of the innumerable benefits offered to mankind through his beloved Son. Religion must bear the stamp and character of its Author. Look at Jesus Christ; was any other character equally amiable ever exhibited to the world? Was he not always engaged in going about doing good? Were not pity and compassion, kindness and love, the governing principles of his nature? Can that be a gloomy or unreasonable service which has Christ for its author, and heaven for its end?

True; but religion requires holiness, and holiness is irksome to the corrupt nature of man. God forbid that I should induce any of my hearers to suppose that what the Gospel requires of us is less arduous than in reality it is, or that I should omit to represent to you the obligations of religion as well as its pleasantness, the justice as well as the compassion and love of God. But still, when our view is directed to these awful considerations our Father's tenderness is yet more clearly discernible. For is God so holy and so high? Then how truly paternal was it in him not to spare his only begotten Son, but to give him up as a sacrifice for our sins! And is holiness so essentially requisite? Behold in religion the provision made for the attainment of it. The Gospel is glad tidings of great joy. It proclaims pardon to the penitent, through Jesus Christ. It bids us draw near to God as reconciled through him. It speaks peace, and inspires hope to the desponding and self-condemned. It assures us of

a Father's aid, in the gift of the Holy Spirit, to them that seek for it. Religion is the restoration of our fallen and corrupt nature, through Divine grace, to a better state and to an eternal inheritance. It is intended and devised to bring fallen sinners to heaven, and thus manifests the tenderness and mercy which belongs to the character of its Author.

Would to God, that I could prevail with those who have hitherto spurned at his laws, and sought for happiness in the ways of sin, to consider the true character of him by whom those laws were given, and the true nature of that religion of which they form a part. Why will they reject a Father's authority? Why will they despise his offered blessing? Can he enjoin any thing inconsistent with their real happiness? Was religion devised for the sake of God, or for the good of men? Is there so much as one precept in the whole law of God which is not evidently intended for our benefit? Can there be a more decisive proof that it is adapted to our good?

3. Is God our Father? Then we ought to maintain an intercourse with him by frequent prayer, and to praise him daily for his innumerable mercies. To whom should a son apply for the supply of all his wants but to his Father? Where should he look for counsel but from his Father's wisdom? Where for comfort but to his Father's love? But are we to have no intercourse with our heavenly Father? Have we nothing to solicit from him? No wants to be supplied? Does God wish his creatures to be so estranged from him? Can a Father desire to have no intercourse with his children? No: God is our Father; and we ought to pray to him daily; not in coldness and formality, but with the dispositions and affections of children. And while we live every day upon the rich stores of his bounty, let us offer up to him continual thanks and praises. When he looks round upon all his children, supported by his bounty, let him not see us wanting

amidst those who acknowledge that they owe every thing to him.

4. Is God our Father? Let us then place a generous confidence in him. A son would be thought ill to requite the goodness of a tender and generous parent, if he kept at a distance from him, placing no reliance on his kindness, and trusting in distress to others rather than to him.

Now, as God is our Father, and as we have innumerable proofs of his paternal goodness, it becomes our duty, as children, to place our whole trust and confidence in him. Believe that he is able and willing to give all things needful for you. Believe that he will be your friend. Call, then, upon him in trouble; and be persuaded that he will either deliver you from your trials, or, if it is his purpose by them to sanctify and bless you, will support you under them. Be satisfied with whatever your heavenly Father appoints for you: know that there is not an affliction which befalls you which is not appointed by him for your good. Receive every mercy as from his hands, and trust that he will still, in answer to your prayers, continue according to your wants to bless and succour you. This, this, my brethren, is our great joy and consolation in a world so full of trials and afflictions, that we have a Father to whose watchful care we may trust. In how forlorn and comfortless a state are those, who look upon the events of life as guided by chance, or who have no resource in their troubles, but in their own prudence to avert, or in their own fortitude to bear them. We have a Father to whom we may apply, and on whom we may depend: and this is our great, our only, solid ground of confidence amidst the changes and chances of life. "My heavenly Father," a Christian will say, "will order and appoint every thing for me. I leave to him my future lot in life. Let him direct what shall be my state: whether I am to be rich or poor: whether I am to be prosperous or in calamity: whether I shall live long or die soon, I cheerfully leave

to the disposal of Him who is my Father. His will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Lastly, Is God our Father? Let us be careful that he is really such to us in the highest sense. Let us take heed that we are his children, by adoption and grace as well as by nature. And to this purpose let us first draw near to him in his own appointed way, as penitent sinners, owning our sins, and seeking for pardon, through Christ Jesus. Let our whole hope and dependence be placed on our Redeemer; and let his atonement be the only plea we offer to God. Let us lay hold on the hope set before us; and then we shall be emboldened to draw near to God with well-placed confidence. This is the great end and aim of all religion, to convince us of our depraved state by nature—to deliver us from it by faith in Christ—and to communicate to us peace, and a lively hope of pardon, and a firm trust and confidence in our heavenly Father. God grant that we may all be partakers of this hope, and enjoy this confidence, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON III.

ON THE ATONEMENT

Heb. ix. 22.

And without shedding of blood is no remission.

IS it not enough (it may be asked,) in order to obtain the pardon of sins, that the sinner should repent of his trespasses and reform his conduct? Is not acknowledgment of the offence, and the reformation of the offender, all which God requires? In his threatenings or punishments, has he any other object? If these are wanting, can any thing compensate for them? If they appear, can the Father of his creatures, who delighteth in mercy, require any other inducement to shew it?

So have men reasoned concerning the Divine proceedings. Of such reasoning, however, we may observe, that it not only supposes us to know adequately the nature of God, and all the ends he has in view in his dispensations of justice and mercy; but assumes also, that there can be no possible reason why he should choose a particular mode in which forgiveness shall be dispensed. Doubtless, whenever God pardons sin, it is of his spontaneous grace and mercy; but yet that free

grace is not at all diminished by his choosing, for wise ends, that the sinner should receive his favours through the channel of some particular institution. And the Bible—the only true history of God's dealings with man—has in fact shewn us, that it has very frequently pleased him to ordain some particular way of dispensing his mercies, independently of the repentance or the good disposition which he has required in the subjects of them.

Thus, on that memorable night in which the Israelites were to be permitted to depart out of Egypt, when the angel of God passed through the land and smote all the first born in every house, it pleased God to appoint, as the means of safety to his people, that they should sprinkle the door-posts, and the lintels of their houses with the blood of a lamb; and that, when the destroying angel saw it, he should pass over that house. For what purpose, it may be asked, was such a rite ordained? Was it not enough that the Israelites were his chosen people; and that the judgment about to be inflicted was intended to effect their deliverance? Could it be needful thus to mark their houses, lest the destroying angel should mistake? Or was this singular ceremony to have the effect of a propitiation? Or what was there so indispensable in the nature of the rite, that prayer to God, and humble confidence in his mercy, could not have engaged the Divine protection without it? I reply, that when we consider the rite without regard to its institution, there was nothing in it which could move the compassion of God, or recommend those who performed it to his favour. But if, for reasons of his own, it seemed good to him to prescribe it, as the condition and the medium of that blessing which he meant to bestow, was he not at liberty to do so? Shall we say, that the rite could not derive from such an appointment a value and efficacy which it did not naturally possess? Is it not, in short, sufficient to say, that the observance of this ceremony ensured safety, and

the neglect of it was followed by destruction, because God had so ordained it?

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, being discouraged because of the way, they spake against God, and against Moses. "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt, to die in the wilderness; for there is no bread, neither is there any water, and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people." In this case not only did the people repent and confess their sin, but Moses also, a most favoured servant and distinguished prophet of the Lord, interceded for them. Was not this, it might be said, enough to obtain forgiveness, and make way for the exercises of the Divine clemency? Yet it did not supersede the necessity of a particular appointment for the communication of that mercy. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived." This was a very remarkable display of the power and goodness of God. The effect was no less than an instantaneous and perfect cure for every Israelite who had been bitten. But how was this cure to be obtained? The wounded were to look to the brazen serpent, elevated for that purpose in the midst of the camp. Consider merely the natural efficacy of these means, and what expedient could have been more hopeless? But God had ordained it to be the remedy. It was his pleasure, on this occasion, to bestow relief on those, and those only, who sought it in this particular way. To look at the serpent,

therefore, was an infallible cure: not one who beheld it perished.

But from these, it may be said, being particular instances, we can draw no inference with respect to those more public and general manifestations of mercy which it is our purpose to examine. In order, therefore, more fully to illustrate these, let me refer you to the institution of sacrifices. I need not remark, that under the Mosaic dispensation scarcely any mercy was sought or obtained without them, and that they therefore made a principal part of the Jewish religion. But I would observe farther, that it was not with the Mosaic dispensation that the use of them began. We must trace them to a higher original and more early antiquity. We find the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, sacrificing to the Lord. We read of Noah, that on his liberation from the ark, "he builded an altar, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings upon the altar to the Lord:"—not only sacrificing, but making a selection of victims; and thus proving, that the rite had been known, and certain kinds of animals appropriated to it in the antediluvian world. Nay, traces of it may even be discerned in the short history of Adam and his immediate descendants. And that very high notions were entertained, with regard to the importance of sacrifices, may be learned from the accounts we have of Noah's posterity, who very generally, and for many ages continued the practice, even when they had lost the tradition of its original and Divine appointment.

Here, then, is a rite venerable for its antiquity, remarkable as being generally observed throughout the world, eminently conspicuous in the Jewish dispensation, and, indeed, constituting an important part of it, in which we discover the rule that God has seen fit to observe in bestowing pardon upon sinners. It is not enough that the offender acknowledges his sin, and implores forgiveness: "Without shedding of blood there

is no remission." An animal must be sacrificed at the altar of God.

But is there, then, any assignable fitness in such a sacrifice to propitiate the favour of the Almighty? "Can the blood of bulls and goats take away sin?" Can God, as the great Parent of all, be delighted with the violent death of his own creatures? Or, as a wise and righteous Being, can he impute the guilt of rational offenders to innocent and irrational animals?—With whatever triumph these questions may have been asked, or however confidently the whole scheme of vicarious sacrifice may have been pronounced absurd and barbarous, it seems a sufficient answer to such objections to say, that the suppositions on which they are grounded need not be made. Why, for instance, must it be supposed that sacrifices had any virtue in themselves to propitiate or appease the Deity? Let us allow that they had in themselves no more efficacy to take away sin, than the sight of the brazen serpent to cure the wounded and dying. Does this invalidate the ordinance? If God is pleased to appoint sacrifices, as the way in which alone he will dispense pardon to the guilty, who shall forbid him; or who shall say that the mode he has adopted is not the most suitable that could have been devised? Is it for men to question the propriety of this Divine appointment, because the reasons of it may not be evident to them? Shall we presume to charge God with cruelty, as delighting in the blood of his unoffending creatures; or with iniquity and folly, as laying guilt upon the innocent and irrational; because he requires the life of a victim as the condition of forgiving sin? Injustice and cruelty are inconsistent with his nature. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "He is good to all; his mercies are over all his works." We, it is true, can neither conceive guilt to be transferred to the animal which is offered as a sacrifice, nor see how the expiation is effected. But that it should be so, was the positive ordinance of God. He had prescribed the rite, and had declared that he

would accept the victim as an atonement; and therefore the humble and penitent Jew, who observed this ordinance, was accepted, forgiven and saved; while a proud unbeliever, who had rejected the means of mercy because he could not comprehend the manner of its operation, would have been left to perish in his sin.

It will be easily perceived that the instances hitherto given of the mode in which God has dispensed his mercy, are but subordinate parts of a general scheme; and closely connected with the great work of Redemption. All the types and shadows of the Mosaic Law, and the previous Divine dispensations, have their value exceedingly increased, when they are considered as forming, with the Christian scheme, one general system, in which, from the beginning of the world to the end of it, the same general scheme is carried on, and the same principles kept in view. The Jewish and Christian dispensations will thus mutually illustrate and confirm each other. The sacrifices of the Law prepare for the atonement of Christ; and that atonement reflects a dignity and glory upon them, by manifesting their nature and completing their design.

We will, therefore, now turn our attention to the chief mercy of God—the gift of his Son for our redemption; observing the mode in which it is dispensed, and comparing it with those in which his goodness has been formerly displayed, that they may serve to illustrate each other.

We may remark, then, the following particulars.

I. The mercy of God, however dispensed to sinners, arises solely from the benignity of his own nature. It is not to be considered as moved and excited by the means which they must use to obtain it. These are only the channel of its communication. Thus, in the Jewish œconomy, it was not the sacrifice which moved God's compassion, and inclined him to mercy: but, being already disposed to shew mercy to his sinful creatures, he was pleased to appoint a sacrifice as the mode in which they should receive it. By attending to this

remark, we shall perceive the fallacy of certain objections to the doctrine of atonement, which suppose an indisposition to mercy in God, and that he was moved to pity us only by the sufferings of our Redeemer. But, on the contrary, the mercy was spontaneous and free. Before the foundations of the world were laid, he foresaw the misery of man, and, in compassion for his ruined state, had determined to redeem him. He it was who contrived the plan of our salvation; who revealed it by various intimations to the early fathers of the world; who selected a race of men, and instituted a peculiar economy amongst them, to preserve the expectation of it, and to prepare for its completion; and who, at length, "in the fullness of time," sent his Son to accomplish and promulgate it. But we have seen that it has pleased him on various occasions, to appoint a special ordinance, as the means of communicating his mercies. When he exempted the Israelites from the death of the first born in Egypt, it was by means of the sprinkling of blood upon the lintels of their houses. When he healed those who had been bitten by serpents, it was through their looking to the brazen serpent. Under the Law, sin was pardoned on the offering of sacrifices; and, under the Christian dispensation, by faith in the great Atonement. In none of these cases is the grace of God diminished by the mode of its communication. It is rather magnified, in consequence of the fuller illustration which it receives. His goodness to the Israelites was surely the same, whether he healed them by requiring that they should look at the brazen serpent, or by an unconditional exertion of his power. And the ordinance had, at least, this advantage, that the miracle appeared greater, when thus contrasted with the total inefficiency of the means. Nor is it less an evidence of his mercy to us, that he has saved us through faith in a Redeemer than if he had pardoned and restored us without any propitiation. Yet when we contemplate the ransom which he was pleased to provide, and believe, as we ought, that there

is a suitableness in the provision; it undoubtedly gives us a view, both of our guilt, and of the greatness of his mercy towards us, which we could never otherwise have obtained. We know, in fact, that all those lofty conceptions of the love of God to sinners, and those rapturous emotions of gratitude on account of it, which we often observe in the writings of the early Christians, have been formed and raised by this very consideration. It was this view of the great atonement of Him, "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet took upon him the form of a servant and humbled himself even to the death of the cross," which taught them to "comprehend the length and breadth, and depth, and height of that love which passeth knowledge," and "constrained them to live, not to themselves, but to him who died for them." The same view has animated and sustained the noble army of martyrs, in all the conflicts and trials through which they fought their way to heaven. It has been matter of admiration and praise to the redeemed in all ages, and will be the theme of their song, when they shall appear before God in Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. Thus has he commended his mercy to us, by the medium of its communication. It is a measure whereby we may take the dimensions of that mercy, which without it would have been immeasurable and inconceivable.

II. God having provided a particular way in which he will manifest his grace, that way derives its efficacy from his appointment. We are not merely to consider the virtue of the ordinance in itself to procure our pardon, but its efficacy as the mode which he has ordained for that purpose. There was little, or rather no virtue, in the blood upon the door-post, to save the first born of the Israelites; in the sound of the rams' horns, to throw down the walls of Jericho; in the cruse of salt, to cure the bitter water; in the blood of victims, to take away sin; in the stream of Jordan, to cure the leprosy of Naaman; in the bunch of figs, to heal the sickness of

Hezekiah. All these things were, in themselves, without efficacy; but God had appointed them as means by which to convey his mercy and goodness to men: therefore they were efficacious: and the less they had in themselves of power, the more clearly did they prove the agency of the Almighty. Hence also the death of Christ derives its sovereign virtue. It is "the power of God to salvation to them that believe." It was the appointed ordinance by which he had determined to grant remission of sin through the riches of his own grace. "Sacrifice and offering (says David, in the person our Lord,) thou wouldest not." These, though for a time required as types of the true Propitiation, were not the means which thou hadst ordained to take away sin—"but a body hast thou prepared me"—I must be made flesh to die for sinners. We are not therefore to conceive, that the death of Christ effects our salvation, merely by the motives which it supplies, or the affections which it produces. It does indeed excite the warmest affections, and supply us with the most cogent motives to repentance and to all holy obedience. But its saving efficacy consists in God's having appointed it to be the means of the remission of our sins. Even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so was the Son of man lifted up, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." The wounded Israelites looked up to the brazen serpent, and in the act of beholding were cured. The penitent sinner looks by faith to Christ lifted up upon the cross; and in the same way, by the grace of God bestowed upon him in believing, his sin is pardoned, and his soul saved.

III. We may remark, that the method in which God dispenses his mercy does not supersede the necessity of repentance.

The Israelites had repented ere God commanded the brazen serpent to be made. The Jews who brought the sacrifice to the temple, were supposed to repent of their sins, and to humble themselves for it; and without

this their sacrifices would not have been accepted. John the Baptist preached repentance as preparative to the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth. Jesus Christ himself sent his seventy disciples with the same commission. The Apostles went through the land of Judea, preaching at the same time "repentance towards God, and faith through the Lord Jesus Christ." Those who are invited to Christ, are supposed to be "weary and heavy laden." And men will no more apply to him by faith for salvation, without a humbling sense of their sins, than they would go to a physician for help, without any consciousness of disease or danger.

IV. On the other hand, we must also observe, that our repentance does not supersede the necessity of *faith*. Still the great effect takes place, through our faith in Christ. God has indeed ordained, that the death of Christ should be the propitiation for sin. "that he may be just and yet the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Yet he requires of man the exercise of faith, whereby we receive the atonement and take the benefit of it for ourselves. As it would not have been sufficient for the cure of the wounded Israelite, that the serpent was lifted up, or that he repented of his rebellion, had he remained in his tent and refused to look upon the remedy: even so, "whosoever believeth in Christ, is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

V. I presume not even to attempt any explanation of the reasons which induced the Almighty to choose this particular mode for the dispensation of his mercy to sinners. It becomes us rather, humbly to acknowledge our ignorance, and adore the depth both of the wisdom and goodness of God. He has ordained it, and let us be satisfied and thankful. Let us not say with Naaman, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? I thought, surely he would have come out to me, and waved his

hand over me." Rather let us thus reverently embrace the mercy of God, without desiring to search into his hidden councils. We are permitted, however, to discover some reasons which prove the propriety of such a mode of dispensing mercy. It manifests exceedingly the grace of God, by shewing that our salvation is to be ascribed to that grace alone. Boasting is thus entirely excluded. And who can say whether it may not be suited to the Divine purity and justice to confer salvation on man, only by subjecting him to the deepest humiliation, by constraining him to feel his own entire inability to save himself, and thus compelling him to ascribe his salvation solely to the Divine mercy? He who has in this manner obtained the remission of his sins, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, has no better ground to boast of his merit, than the wounded Israelite had to extol his own skill when he was healed merely from looking to the brazen serpent. Let me add also, that as there might have been some great impropriety in the unconditional forgiveness of sinners, so had the conditions of salvation been our own obedience, or the sincerity of our repentance, no one would have been saved. But this dispensation holds out great encouragement to such weak and unworthy sinners as we are. We may say as the servants of Naaman, "If the prophet had bid thee to do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

My fellow-sinners, God has provided a Saviour, even Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son. He has exalted him in the world, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." Without shedding of blood there was no remission of sin under the Law; and under the Gospel it is only granted through the blood of Christ shed upon the cross. Are you therefore looking to this great Object of the Gospel, for salvation, and to this only? Are you truly sorry for your sin, and humbled before God on account of your unworthiness? Without this, the remedy which God

has provided is useless: it cannot be received—you will not—you cannot come to Christ. But if you are really humbled for sin, are you then putting your trust not in your own resolutions, not in your future obedience, not even in the motives and affections which you derive from the Gospel, but in that great Sacrifice offered upon the cross? Are you directing your view to it; relying upon it; joyfully believing the record that that God has given, thankfully receiving it as his inestimable gift, and daily walking with God, through the hope with which the death of Christ inspires us? Objections, indeed, you may expect to rise in your minds against this way of salvation. It is not at once that we discover our own weakness, and the unworthiness even of our best deeds. It is not at once that the glory of Christ, given for sinners, appears the principal object in our view. Yet let me exhort you to seek after a clearer discovery of your own state, and of the efficacy of that sacrifice for sin which your Saviour has offered. Thus may you be led to a firmer faith in Christ. It is his death which we preach to you, as the hope, the only hope for sinners. It is his death which we are now about to commemorate, as the object of a Christian's hope, in the symbols of it set before us. Look therefore to that, with the expectation of virtue to be derived from it, able to heal your soul and to restore to it the favour and blessing of God and eternal life. Thus may Christ dwell in your hearts by faith, and your hope be founded upon the Rock of ages!

SERMON IV.

THE NATURE OF HUMAN CORRUPTION.

Rom. viii. 7.

The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

IT is related of the old men amongst the Jews, who had been witnesses to the grandeur and excellence of the temple built by Solomon, that, when on their return from Babylon they saw the inferiority of it as rebuilt by Nehemiah and Ezra, they lifted up their voices and wept. How much more cause have we for sorrow, if we consider the original state of man, the living temple of the Lord, created in righteousness and true holiness, worthy of the Divine Architect, and fit for an habitation of God; and compare this with that state of ruin into which it has now fallen—with the marks of sin, corruption, misery, and death, which are every where stamped upon it!

Sin came into the world by the transgression of Adam: “by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners.” The children of Adam were born in the same corrupt

state into which he had fallen: all of them were heirs of the same miseries, and exposed to the same dreadful consequences of sin which had followed his transgression. Such, then, is the state of every man now born into the world. He possesses a nature which, according to the words of the Article of our Church, is “very far gone from original righteousness,”—a nature which is even enmity against God, and which, till renewed by Divine influence, is not, and cannot be, subject to the law of God. We might be induced, by this representation of our state, to pray for that operation of the Holy Spirit which alone can cleanse us from the defilement of our sin.

In considering the subject of my text, three points present themselves to our inquiry.

I. What is meant by the term *carnal mind*.

II. In what sense we are to understand the carnal mind to be at enmity with God.

III. What proofs of this we experience in ourselves, or see in others.

I. What we are to understand by the term *carnal* or *fleshly mind*.

We may observe, that the terms *flesh* and *spirit* are generally in Scripture opposed to each other; and the *Spirit*, when that opposition is expressed, evidently means, not merely the soul of man, as distinguished from the body, but the spiritual frame of mind which is wrought in the believer through the influence of the Holy Ghost. And therefore the *flesh*, which is opposed to it, must signify the state of man by nature; as he is, when left to himself, without such Divine power or agency exerted upon him.

In this sense, the whole context leads us to interpret the passage. “They that are after the flesh,” says the Apostle, “do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit:” *i.e.* Those who are merely in a natural state regard only the things belonging to the body, and to this life; but they that are spiritual, or renewed in

their minds, do mind the things of the Spirit. But he adds, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Now, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." In these passages, taken together, we have first the *origin* of our spiritual life—the Spirit of God dwelling in us; then the *effect* of it—minding the things of the Spirit; and the *issue* of it—life and peace. Let this be compared with the *issue*, the *effect*, and the *origin* of the condition which is termed carnal; and we shall find that the expression is evidently intended to describe the state in which men are by nature, without the renewal of the Holy Spirit; in which they live in sin; and in which if they die, they inherit eternal death.

The same opposition of the flesh to the Spirit is found in our Lord's discourse to Nicodemus and in the same sense: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The agency of the Spirit of God upon the soul, in order to qualify it for the kingdom of God, is here expressly asserted; and the *state* of a person living under this Divine influence is termed "spirit." "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The flesh, therefore, which is put in opposition to this, must signify the state of man without the agency of the Holy Spirit. And this is not peculiar to a few who are more than ordinarily sinful: it is not the effect of confirmed habits or a long course of sin, but is inherent in the very constitution of man: for "as that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, so that which is born of the flesh is flesh."

I will add another passage, in which the same terms are opposed to each other, and evidently in the same sense. In Galatians, v. 16, it is said, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Here the flesh is represented as a corrupt principle within us, naturally lusting after that which is evil; but this is more fully expressed in the following words:

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and they are contrary the one to the other.” What could have been said more plainly to shew, that when the Apostle speaks of the flesh, as opposed to the Spirit, he means something evil in the nature of man, which resists and counteracts what is excellent and holy; the laws of God, for instance, and the motions of his good Spirit in the heart? And, would we know more particularly what are these lusts of the flesh, and what the effects of the Spirit’s influence; that is, what are the works of a sinful, and what those of a renewed, nature: the Apostle goes on to inform us—“The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

From all these passages, taken collectively, we may have a full view of what the Scriptures intend by the flesh, and the spirit or spiritual mind. We learn from them, that mankind are born in a depraved, sinful, ruined state; that the mind of man in that state is fixed only upon earthly things; that the works natural to him are “wicked works,” such as arise from lust, vanity, pride, anger, and selfishness; that in this state he is utterly unfit for the kingdom of God, and incapable of enjoying the spiritual happiness of that kingdom; that “in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing;” but that God has been pleased to send his Holy Spirit into the world to guide, bless, and sanctify those that truly embrace the Gospel of his Son; that from him they receive a spiritual principle, a holy and divine nature; that they “mind the things of the Spirit, put off the old man with his corrupt deeds, and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;” that thus they become new creatures in Christ Jesus; “old things pass away, behold all things

become new;" that they "crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts," and "walk after the Spirit," bringing forth "the fruits of the Spirit." We learn, in short, that the nature of man, till renewed by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is corrupt, and that it is "enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

II. In what sense, therefore, are we to understand this enmity to God.

1. We are not to suppose, that the unregenerate man is at enmity with God *according to the character which he usually forms of him*. He commonly thinks of God only as a great, wise, and good Being, and he feels no sentiment of opposition to the attributes of wisdom, greatness, or goodness. Nay, while he considers these as exerted in his behalf, and in that of his fellow-creatures, he may even feel a certain degree of complacency and delight in them. He may rejoice that there is a good and Almighty Being, at the head of the universe, who can and will control the evil which might else break forth without measure, to disturb the harmony and peace of the world. He may look with pleasure upon the glorious works he has made; at the provision he has so richly furnished to supply the wants of man and beast; and at the laws and the providence by which so vast and various a creation is administered and preserved, through all its orders of being, equally in the great and the minute, according to the will and purpose of its Creator. These, he will say, are the works of the great Parent of Good, and manifest his wisdom: all things proclaim his praise, and men ought, above the rest of his creation, to render thanks and adoration to him. Such, I say, may be the views and feelings even of an unregenerate man. And when a person in this state is told, that his mind is naturally at enmity with God, he will perhaps revolt against the charge, appeal confidently to his own heart for its refutation, and be unable, even after cool and candid reflection, to admit it in any sense as true.

In explaining the meaning of the Apostle's words, therefore, we must be very careful not to confound the real character of God with that which we may have formed of him for ourselves. In the view which sinners usually take of the attributes of God; his supreme authority as the Governor of the world, his infinite purity and holiness as hating, and his justice as avenging sin, are kept out of sight: a Being is framed in their imagination, very much resembling themselves; a Being who will be merciful and indulgent to sinners; will allow them to live in a great measure as they please, and punish only the sins which would be very injurious to society; yet easily forgiving even these, and ready to bestow eternal happiness upon all his creatures, even upon such as may have been total strangers to the life of purity and holiness which he requires.

2. Further, enmity against the Almighty is not to be considered as a *personal* enmity, but rather as a dislike of the government which he exercises, and of the laws which he ordains; those laws particularly which concern ourselves, which restrain us from any course of conduct we are desirous to pursue, or require from us what we feel no disposition to perform;—these are the objects of our dislike: and enmity against them may be properly said to be enmity against God; for it resists his authority, power, and dominion in the world. Hence in my text, the enmity of the carnal mind is thus explained; “for it is not subject to the *law* of God.” All, therefore, who dislike the purity of God's laws, may be said to dislike him. They would shew even a personal dislike of him, did they clearly see his hand restraining, correcting, punishing what is evil; did they behold the frown with which he observes them when following the inclinations of their carnal mind, and the arm of his vengeance lifted up against perverse and incorrigible sinners.

3. Again, when we say that the unregenerate mind is enmity against God, or in other words “corrupt,” we are not to understand that it is totally destitute of

every thing that is good; that it has not qualities which are in a certain degree commendable; that it is equally addicted to every species of vice; or that there is no difference in guilt, between the young who are but beginning to act according to their nature, and those whose natural corruption is confirmed and matured by a long habit and indulgence of sin. Nothing is implied, in the doctrine, concerning an equality of guilt or corruption among men. It is sufficient to say, that human nature is corrupt in us all, that there is in all a proneness to sin—a natural tendency to approve and do things which it has pleased God to condemn and forbid, and a natural dislike of many duties which he has thought fit to enjoin. Let man be left entirely to the workings of his own mind, let him be restrained by no fear of punishment, and induced by no hope of reward; and he would invariably follow, not a course of holy obedience to his Maker, as an angel would do from inclination, but a course of selfish and sinful indulgence. God would not be in all his thoughts, nor would the authority of God be the rule of his conduct. He would live, not to him who made him, but wholly to himself—a life after the flesh and after the course of this present world;—would be sensual in his gratifications, or ungovernable in his tempers, proud in his imaginations or ambitious in his pursuits, greedy of gain or sunk in pleasure. In a word, he would be found doing some or other of “the works of the flesh,” and be far from bringing forth “the fruits of the Spirit.”

III. Then, how far is this corruption of our nature illustrated by what we experience in ourselves, or see in others.

And here let us examine our own hearts, and say, as in the sight of God, what dispositions are natural to them, what tempers and desires are the most congenial to our frame, and strike deepest root in our souls as a soil congenial to them. Shall we, upon the careful review of our lives, perceive that the love of God has been our first and ruling principle, that our

chief desire has been to glorify his Name, and to fulfil his commands: that as soon as we knew him, we felt a desire to obey and glorify him as God: a strong, uniform, and abiding propensity to search after his will—a steadfast disposition to perform it readily, heartily, and with joy: that we found no impediment in the service of God, no difficulty to overcome, no reluctance, no drawing of the inclination an opposite way; but that it was a smooth, easy, and delightful work, as when we follow the natural propensity of our own minds: that it would have been difficult for us to have neglected his commands, and painful to have acted contrary to them? And do we find the same temper and disposition in others also as well as in ourselves? Are the sins committed in the world, committed through ignorance merely? Does the sinner repent of them, and forsake them as soon as he hears they are contrary to the Divine will? Do our children discover a bias, even from their early infancy, to what is right and excellent? Have we only to instruct them in the path of duty, in order that they may walk in it? Do we see in them, as soon as their tempers begin to unfold, a natural dislike of evil and love of what is good—a spirit of meekness, of patience, of long suffering, and indifference to the pomps and vanities of the world—a relish for high and holy subjects of conversation? Do we, in consequence of this disposition, see all men agreeing to bring forth the fruits of righteousness; and no contention among them but how most to glorify God? Is the ear delighted to hear on every side, from the mouth of young and old, rich and poor, the sounds of praise and thanksgiving? Does the ravished eye behold, in our streets and villages, the constant intercourse of benevolence and kind affection, each man vying with his neighbour how best to promote the general happiness? Are all families living in harmony, and cordially united in the service of God? Is it the first care of each individual to promote His glory? Is it the greatest dread of all to act contrary to the will of the Most High? Is the

world, in consequence of any inherent disposition to virtue, of any natural tendency to what is good, (and the general tendencies of nature must always in the end prevail)—is the world, I say, one grand exhibition of purity, kindness, meekness, benevolence, holiness, patience, resignation, humility, Divine zeal, and love? Alas! I need not proceed in an inquiry which begins already to assume the air of sarcasm. The truth is too plainly apparent, that the state of the world is the reverse of all this, and discovers, beyond dispute, that obliquity and corruption of our common nature which make it what it is.

Let us, however, press the matter home upon our own consciences. Do not we find it a labour to do what is right? Does not even self-interest, usually the most powerful motive, lose its efficacy here? Is it not in fact, true, that even the union of temporal and eternal blessings, the clear perception of real present advantage, with the hope of a joyful immortality, are continually found to be motives too weak to engage us with vigour and steadiness in the service of God? And when our fears of misery, or our desires of happiness, induce us to attempt this service, how numerous, how powerful, how much exaggerated, by the strong apprehensions of an unwilling mind, are the difficulties which arise to deter us! How quickly are we discouraged, and with how little resistance do we yield! Where is now the unbending firmness of purpose, the stout and daring resolution, which we shew when crossed in a favourite scheme of interest or ambition: or in the pursuit of any object on which we really set our hearts? And how soon, at best, do spiritual motives lose their force, in minds habitually taken up with carnal and earthly objects! How dull and lifeless are those affections, when directed to the things above, which we find so apt, ardent and uncontrollable, when set loose upon the world, and the things of the world! How short and pleasant do the longest periods seem, if spent in the folly and vanity congenial to our nature:

the whole days and nights, for instance, of mirth, and riot, and dissipation; and how tedious is one solitary hour, if set apart for the service of God, and the sacred exercises of devotion!

The meaning of such words as enjoyment, pleasure, happiness, is always settled by the common taste of mankind; and the general use and acceptation of them will determine how that taste is to be gratified. Are sacred duties then, usually mentioned as acts of pleasure and enjoyment? Or does the acquisition of holiness and virtue enter at all into the common notion of felicity? Is he deemed the happy man, who finds his happiness in the favour of God, in the exercise of graces and virtues which God approves, in doing his will and promoting his glory? Or rather, is it not he who can command the means and resources of worldly gratification; who can fulfil at pleasure the desires of the flesh and the mind, and say to his soul, "Thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?" Do we not find that we ourselves are perpetually making this estimate of things, and setting up a false standard of right and wrong? Are not our affections, and desires, and prejudices, in hostility to our reason, our conscience, our better judgment, and the word of God; the law of our members warring with the law of our mind? Is not a holy life necessarily a life of self-denial, a life requiring pains and watchfulness, and these constant and without intermission? Do we not feel that, in order to live in the service of God, we must crucify the old man with his lusts, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus? Is there not constant need to reprove ourselves; to press the strongest motives and most alarming perils upon our minds; to place a guard upon all our passions and affections, and to pray earnestly for Divine help? And, after all, are we not too often foiled in our efforts? Do we not, through the inveteracy of our corruptions, find our labours almost fruitless, and ourselves compelled to exclaim with the Apostle, "Oh! wretched man

that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Behold, then, the carnal mind, which is enmity against God! They who have truly endeavoured to serve him, feel and lament this; for it is by the resistance of evil, that the reality and strength of the corrupt principle within is most clearly discovered. They who are yielding to every depraved propensity of their nature, are the persons who are always most disposed to deny its corruption; for they are really ignorant of the power of the enemy, whom they never attempt to resist.

Such, then, being the state of man, let us endeavour to reap improvement from the representation made of it in my text.

1. Let us learn *humiliation*.—To be at enmity with God is indeed an odious and deplorable state of mind: for it is enmity with perfect Truth, Justice, Goodness, Purity; and to possess this enmity not occasionally or incidentally, but uniformly, by a propensity of nature, argues a degree of corruption which should excite the deepest self-abhorrence. We may be inclined, perhaps, to look with partiality upon ourselves; and, turning away our eyes from the proofs of depravity, to delude ourselves with a notion of our excellencies and virtues. "He who judgeth all things is God;" and what we are before him we should appear in our own eyes. His judgment, and that of men, may (it is evident) be greatly at variance on this subject. His purity is infinite. He cannot endure the least stain of pollution. "The heavens are unclean in his sight; and he chargeth his angels with folly." How, then, must *we* appear before him? We (amongst the lowest, yet at the same time the most highly favoured and distinguished, of his rational creatures,) who have dared to make light of his authority; to rebel against his commands; to do repeatedly what he has forbidden; to leave undone every day what he has commanded; to be unthankful to him for his goodness, and even to abuse the mercies he has bestowed upon us. Surely the

consideration of this should constrain us, when we approach our Creator, to prostrate ourselves with the lowest self-abasement before him; like the poor publican, who durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" This temper is suited to the actual state of man, and therefore it is especially required of him.

2. Let us learn from this subject the unspeakable value of an *atonement*.—When the sinner feels the burden of his sins, it is a blessed relief to know that they may be pardoned; that God "can be just and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." This, then, is the discovery which the Gospel opens to us. Great as our vileness may be, there is a way in which we may have access to God, and in which he will receive us graciously; not indeed on our own account, but for the sake of his beloved Son, who offered himself as the propitiation for our sins. How infinite was that love which induced the Saviour to take our nature upon him, and suffer in our behalf! Through faith in him, the weary and heavy laden sinner may not only indulge hope, but look forward with delightful anticipation to the joys of heaven. How gratefully then should he receive the inestimable gift of the Gospel! With what holy transport should he look to him "who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," and adore the wisdom and goodness of God, who has provided so great a salvation for mankind!

3. Let this subject teach us the necessity of Christian *vigilance*, of *self-denial*, and earnest *supplication* for the influence of the Holy Spirit.—A nature so corrupt must not be trifled with. With such propensities, we should ever be on our guard in a world which so abounds with temptation. Such a nature will require constant self-denial. To give way to it, is to cherish sin. Mortification, therefore, must not be declined; although not such a mortification as some have re-

quired, consisting only in outward penances, or in a retreat from the world into deserts or convents, or in idle singularities;—but self-denial, with respect to those affections and passions which lead to sin; the suppression of all intemperance, impurity, covetousness, pride, on their first risings in the mind; a mortification of the love of human applause and of the excessive fear of human censure; the studious avoiding of all temptations: nay, caution and jealousy, even in the use of lawful things, lest we should abuse them to sinful purposes. In a word, it must be the main object of every real Christian to watch over, and subdue all those corrupt propensities which oppose the will and commandments of God. But above all, with such a nature, and amidst so many temptations, how necessary is it, that we should earnestly implore the Giver of all good, to give us a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within us, to put his fear within our hearts, and to write his laws upon them!

SERMON V.

ON THE INABILITY OF MAN

John xv. 5.

Without me ye can do nothing.

THAT we can do nothing really excellent without Divine assistance, is a doctrine which is held by different persons for very different purposes. While the real Christian is led by it to implore with earnestness the Divine aid, and to depend upon the grace of God in Christ, the sinner, who is acting against the conviction of his own conscience, has recourse to the same doctrine to justify his continuance in sin. "I feel," he says, "the power of a corrupt nature; I acknowledge my guilt and my wretchedness; I desire to be in a better state; but I can do nothing of myself. If I attempt to break my fetters, I find it impossible: if I strive to repent, I perceive I cannot; if I endeavour to reform myself, I too soon relapse again into sin. I resolve: but it is only to break my resolutions: and all my efforts serve only to give me a clearer conviction of my own inability. It is my desire that God would give me his grace: but till he is pleased to do this, I find that I

can no more reform myself, than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots." The conclusion to which such reasoning leads, is not a determination to use a greater degree of constancy and earnestness in imploring the help of God, but rather an acquiescence in a state of sin, a continuance in it upon principle, a tacit justification of ourselves, and an indirect imputation of our guilt to our Creator, either for his having formed us in a state of such weakness, or for his neglecting to grant us the grace we need.

But it is not only the open sinner who reasons in this manner. There are some who possess better aims and desires, who argue in a more refined way to nearly the same effect; and who, if they do not abandon all exertion, at least submit without resistance to the dominion of sin. Conscious of the helplessness of man, and fearing to invade the province of God, who alone can give salvation, they look upon their endeavours to become partakers of the grace of God with a jealous eye, and are almost afraid to employ the very means of grace which God has provided, and required us to use, lest they should derogate from his grace, or appear to be fitting themselves for it.

To obviate these most dangerous perversions, it may be laid down as a maxim in divinity—That it is necessary not only to hold the doctrines of the Bible, but also to view those doctrines in the same light in which the inspired writers viewed them, and to make only the same inferences from them which they did. For there is scarcely any truth which may not be held in a partial manner, or seen through a distorting medium: so that we then only believe as the Apostles did, when we receive their tenets in the same full and comprehensive manner in which they delivered them, dwell upon them in the same proportion to other truths, and draw the same conclusions from them. Let us, therefore, examine by this rule what the sacred writers have said concerning the inability of man. Let us inquire, whether they use it in order to discourage our attempts

and prevent our exertions: or, on the contrary, with the very opposite intention, that of encouraging us to persevere in a Christian course.

To begin with the discourse of our Saviour, of which my text makes a part—"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." Here the inability of man, and the necessity of the Divine agency of Christ, are set forth in very strong terms: but what is the inference which our Saviour himself deduces from it? It is this: "Abide in me, and I" will abide "in you." That is, Let the knowledge of your own weakness shew you the necessity of obtaining strength from me, and therefore receive my words, cleave closely to me by prayer and faith; and I will hear your prayer, and will be with you to strengthen you: or, as it is expressed in the 7th verse, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

In the Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul declares, that it is "God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Here it is asserted, that God not only strengthens us in action, but that it is He who must give even the will to do any thing acceptable to himself. What then, is the Apostle's inference? That we are to sit down and wait with patience, till God more fully inclines our wills and works upon our hearts? No. Therefore, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," lest, by neglecting it, you should slight and grieve that Divine Spirit who carries on the work of grace in the soul.

In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, we meet with this expression, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." The Apostle is speaking of the success of his ministry amongst the people whom he was then addressing—"Ye," says he, "are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us.

written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart." The Apostles had thus written upon these tables of the heart the characters of Christ. But as it would have been arrogating too much to attribute this work to their own agency, St. Paul adds, that, "the power was of God." Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, by any power of our own persuasion or reasoning, without the help of God, to convert you; but our sufficiency is of God only. The efficacy of the Apostles' preaching was therefore ascribed by them exclusively to the Divine power. But what line of conduct did they pursue in consequence of their conviction of this truth? Did they relax in their endeavours, in the hope that God would act without their agency? No; they acted as if all the interest of Christ depended upon their exertions: they went about every where preaching the Word. They were "instant in season and out of season;" being defamed, they entreated; being reviled they blessed; being persecuted, they suffered it; they hungered and thirsted, and were buffeted; and they became all things to all men, if by any means they might save some. Their conviction of the power of God did not for an instant, suspend their endeavours or labours.

In these passages, therefore, and I think in every other part of Scripture in which the inability of man is stated, the obvious intention is to animate, and not to discourage our exertions; to teach us our own weakness, that we may be led to implore the aid which is freely offered to all who ask it in the name of Christ. If the necessity of Divine help would preclude our prayers and our exertions, it would also, for the same reason, supersede the necessity of preaching or the interpretation of the word of God; the endeavour to procure our food, and all the necessary labours of life. If the opposite inferences could be justly derived from this doctrine, we should be compelled by similar reasoning, to adopt conclusions evidently absurd.

Let us therefore consider this great truth in an encouraging light. The language of God, when he speaks on this subject, is that of a tender Father, who, seeing his children endeavouring to accomplish a labour too arduous for their infant strength, offers them his assistance, and reminds them of their weakness, only that they may have recourse to that help which pride and self ignorance would induce them to refuse. Let us, then, more exactly consider, *first*, what is the Scripture doctrine respecting the inability of man; and, *secondly*, the grounds we have to hope that the strength of Christ will be made perfect in our weakness.

1. Without Christ, then, we can do nothing; that is, nothing effectual to the salvation of our souls.—We may use a prayer, we may attend the ordinances of Divine grace; but without him we can do nothing, proceeding from right motives, and continued with steady perseverance; nothing to the effective mortification of the body of sin; nothing to the cleansing our souls from the guilt of our transgressions. The language of our Saviour does not suppose that we are unable to use any endeavours, ^{but} that we are unable to do any thing effectual to our salvation, without the help and grace of Christ. Let us enter more minutely into the consideration of the several particulars of which this general view of my subject is composed.

We cannot, then, without Christ, obtain forgiveness of the sins which we have committed. It is the whole tendency of the Gospel to point out Christ as the Saviour of the world, the great sacrifice for our offences, through the shedding of whose most precious blood alone, we can obtain remission of sins. Now, in order to be partakers of the benefits of his death, we must “be found in him;” that is, we must be united to him by faith; for none but those who truly believe in him, are interested in his mediation. Without him, therefore, we can do nothing to satisfy the justice of a holy and justly incensed God; nothing to cancel the guilt of our many transgressions of the Divine Law;

nothing effectual to render ourselves acceptable in the eyes of the righteous Governor of the world, who is pleased to dispense mercy only to those who, hearing the Gospel of Christ, make application to Him, and through Him draw nigh to the Father.

2. Without him we can do nothing effectual to the purification of our corrupt natures.—What, though we sometimes resolve to serve God? How soon are our resolutions broken! How slight a temptation has power to efface them from our remembrance! What, though we sometimes pray? Yet, how imperfect are our prayers, how unworthy in themselves to be offered up to the pure and holy majesty of God! What, though we sometimes endeavour to flee from the wrath to come? Yet this fear of punishment may be consistent with the love of sin, may be wholly a selfish passion, without any mixture of the love of God. What, though we attempt to obey God? Do we not perceive how desultory, how defective, how corrupted our obedience is? Are we not convinced, from our own experience, that we need a better principle, that we want the aid of superior power to enable us to offer up our bodies and souls as a spiritual sacrifice holy and acceptable to God? Are we not persuaded that we are poor and frail creatures, who can do nothing effectually, but as we are quickened and enlivened by the Spirit of God?

Should you still question this important truth, let me appeal to the principles which seem to be natural to man, which appear in his earliest infancy, and are congenial to his very frame: principles which from youth to manhood are continually acquiring additional strength—which the customs of the world tend to rivet upon the mind—which become the general springs of action, the sources of all the business, hurry, splendour, and pleasure of the world. Examine well your hearts, and observe how much they are governed by the desire of praise, or the love of money, or the gratification of pride and vanity, the desire of ease, or fleshly indul-

gence. Not to know the power of these passions is not to know yourself. But if you have learnt the influence of a corrupt nature, fortified by inveterate habits and supported by the customs of the world, you will need no other knowledge to convince you, that the assistance of God is necessary, to enable you to engage with activity in his service. And is not this a difficult work? Does it not appear to be almost impossible? By what principles will you accomplish it? Those which you possess will not be sufficient; and those which would avail, you have yet to obtain. A gradual alteration may, I grant, be made in the outward system of our lives, from experience of past inconveniences or misfortunes: but this is only a different direction given to the same principles. Selfishness has assumed a different shape, which although perhaps less distant from true righteousness, is still very remote from it. The fear of God, and the love of God, can only be implanted in the heart by God himself.

But are you still unconvinced? What say you then, to the levity and fickleness of your heart? Are you not alarmed to perceive how soon, how very soon, you have forgotten the strongest resolutions, and lost the liveliest emotions of love to God? Do you not find in yourself, a constant proneness to relapse into insensibility and sin, while, on the other hand the return to God is difficult, is forced, is extraordinary—I had almost said, is unnatural? With such dispositions to impede your progress, consider also how much you must attain. To be a real Christian is to resemble Christ. It is to act from pure motives, to walk in holiness of heart and life, to renounce the world with all its pomps and vanities, and the flesh with all its sinful affections. It is to be heavenly minded, to possess holy affections, to be an heir of God through Christ Jesus.

Consider, then, the difficulties you have to encounter. You have enemies whom you see not. Besides the custom of the world, which like a mighty tide bears every thing before it, you will be assaulted by foes whose

attacks you cannot foresee. You have to wrestle “not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” How then shall you be able to prevail against such powers? Where are your resources? Look within, and you discover only a weak and wavering resolution, a corrupt nature, and a treacherous heart. How then will you fight such a battle, and persevere in it to the end?

In fact, the trial has been sufficiently made. We are not now to learn what the powers of nature could do, and what would be the effect of the arguments which reason could adduce. Philosophy long opposed her barrier to the passions of men. She pointed out the inconveniences of vice to ourselves and to society. She made eulogiums upon the excellence of reason, and in many respects well explained the folly of transgression. But after all her efforts, twelve illiterate men were able, through the power of Christ, to promote the reformation of the world, in a far higher degree than all the various sects of philosophers, with all their united labours. What instantaneous effects did the preaching of the Apostles produce! With what power was the heart arrested by it! Nature and habits were changed at once: the debauched and sensual became pure and holy, and devoted their whole lives to the service of God. What an index is this; pointing out to us the unseen power of the Spirit of God, imparting his strength to the weak and his holiness to the impure!

II. Without me ye can do nothing.—This expression intimates, that with Christ we may be able to do all things necessary to salvation: and, taken in connexion with the discourse of which it is a part, it shews us the power of our gracious Redeemer employed in helping and saving those who come to him by faith.

Jesus Christ is the “Alpha and Omega” of the Christian religion. Herein it is essentially distinguished

from every other religious system. It has a Mediator, an Atonement, a Saviour. It does not merely inculcate the practice of moral duties; it points out one "able to save, even to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him." This Divine Saviour sends his Spirit into the hearts of Christians, and thus, by his abiding influence, may be said to dwell or to abide in them. Hence the Apostle uses such terms as these: "I live," "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And he thus warns the Corinthians: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" St. John encourages the disciples in similar language: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." And our Saviour promises, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

All these scriptural declarations, when stripped of their figurative language, must surely amount at least to this, that Christ will influence the hearts of those that believe on him; that he will assist them in their obedience, and impart to them a degree of peace and comfort which they could only obtain from his peculiar favour.

And is it indeed one of the principal articles of the Christian faith, that there is a Saviour by whose strength our weakness is to be supported? Then it is evident that a new direction must be given to our endeavours: they must not be less earnest, but they must be in some measure turned into a different channel. It must be our principal object to be made partakers of Christ, to receive strength from him, to glorify and praise him for all the grace we enjoy, to exercise dependence upon him, and to rejoice in his mercy and power. Behold here the principle, by which we may understand all the strong expressions of love and gratitude

which the Apostle felt: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." "The love of Christ constraineth us." Such language evinces something more than the reverence due to the character of a Teacher; it argues a mind labouring to express the warmest feelings of gratitude to the Highest of benefactors. It exhibits the feelings of a heart which contemplated God, as the Guide and Supporter of man, as a Redeemer and an Intercessor.

Let us apply, then, the doctrine which has been delivered.

1. Let it awaken those who excuse their slothfulness, or their love of sin, under the plea of their own inability. Be persuaded either that you mistake the Gospel, or that you pervert it. You may wait, as you think, for the grace of God, and in the mean time hope you are excusable, though you gain not the victory over sin; or you may go still farther, and satisfy yourself with occasional prayers for the mercy and grace of God: but be assured, that at the great day of judgment these excuses will not justify you in his sight. Place yourselves in imagination at that solemn bar, before which you must one day stand. Will you dare, then, to plead as an excuse for your sins, that you could not convert yourself? Would such a plea be admitted by that righteous Judge? Your consciences will answer that question. Man is a responsible creature, and the doctrines of the Gospel must not be so interpreted as to destroy his responsibility. Be assured that our guilt will not be removed, nor the awful sentence of condemnation suspended by a metaphysical subtlety. Arise.

then, and shake off your lethargy: consider yourself as a sinner on the brink of perdition. Know your danger, and let the knowledge of it influence your conduct. Who, in the instant of peril, stays to reason upon the difficulty of avoiding it, or on natural and moral impossibility? It is a moment in which every faculty is called into exercise, when we cease to speculate and begin to act. Be this your example. Call upon God. Use the means of grace without embarrassing yourself by inquiring into subtle questions which none can thoroughly understand. Thus, and thus only, can you escape the wrath to come. But if you persist in attempting nothing, because nothing can be accomplished but by the power of God, what can you expect but to perish, as despisers of the grace which has been offered through Jesus Christ?

2. Let this doctrine teach us humility and dependence upon Christ.—Far be it from me, to minister to the pride of our corrupt nature by an exaggerated representation of our own strength. All power is from God; and our conviction of this truth should be evident by our earnestness in seeking the Divine assistance. Beware of entertaining high thoughts of yourself, or of expecting to do any thing acceptable to God; but by his especial grace working in you to will and to do. Prove that you believe the doctrine of man's inability by the disposition in which you enter upon any good work. Let it be with fervent prayer to God for ability. Proceed in the execution of it, with a constant dependence upon the grace of Christ, and with deep humility of spirit. And when you look back upon any act of holy obedience, see that you do not cherish pride and self-exaltation; but with all lowliness of mind, render your thanksgiving to God, whose grace has enabled the unworthiest and weakest of his servants to glorify his Name.

3. Let us derive from this subject encouragement in seeking to know God; and in endeavouring to serve him. The legitimate knowledge of our own weakness

is given by God. He imparts it to those who faithfully strive against sin, who read the Scriptures with diligence, and stedfastly use the means of grace. I say the legitimate knowledge; for there is a spurious knowledge of our own inability, which arises merely from the indulgence of our corrupt propensities. Such is his knowledge, who yields to his sins because he loves them, who neither strives for victory over his depraved nature nor seriously wishes to be delivered from its power. This kind of knowledge can produce no salutary effect. It generates only inactivity and self-indulgence. But the legitimate knowledge of our inability, though it is given to humble man, yet is given to encourage him also: to encourage him to apply to a gracious God, who has sent his Son to redeem us, and his Spirit to help our infirmities. Be emboldened then, notwithstanding the sense of your weakness, to hope in the Lord, and to put your trust in his power and grace. Look to him with renewed earnestness and confidence: trust in his grace, and rely upon his promises: and the strength of Christ will be made perfect in the weakness of man, and the glory of the Lord be displayed, where our own insufficiency is most deeply felt and acknowledged.

SERMON VI.

ON THE CONNEXION BETWEEN REGENERATION AND OTHER DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL.

John iii. 1—3.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

WHEN a person, claiming so high a title as that of the Son of God, proposes to us a new religion, grounded upon the evidence of various miracles; and declares, that, according to their reception or rejection of it, mankind shall be saved or perish for ever; it is highly incumbent upon us clearly to understand what are its characteristic doctrines and peculiar genius, and wherein it essentially differs from others religions which have been received in the world. The curiosity of Nicodemus

mus, therefore, was laudable; and the inquiry he made was proper and important. He had seen Jesus perform such miracles as indisputably proved that God was with him; and he considered those miracles as attestations to the truth of the doctrines he delivered. "We know," says he, "that Thou art a Teacher come from God." But though he was persuaded of this, he does not appear yet to have been satisfied respecting the peculiar nature of the doctrine of Christ; and he therefore comes to him by night, to seek information on that subject.

In answer to his inquiry, our Lord without further preface, lays down with a solemn asservation, a doctrine so intimately connected with every other part of Christianity, that it may be justly called the fundamental article of the Christian faith: and further to enforce the practical observance of this great truth, he declares, that except a person experienced the change of which he spoke, he could not enter the kingdom of God.

Regeneration has, by some, been supposed to mean little more than the being admitted into the church by the act of baptism. I shall not on this occasion enter into the refutation of this doctrine, which I think is supported neither by reason nor Scripture. It will be sufficient for my present purpose to observe, that this supposition would degrade the character of the Most High, since it represents him as punishing with eternal destruction the neglect of an appointed rite; and that it is derogatory to the person and mission of our Redeemer, who is thus exhibited as enforcing with the utmost solemnity, and by the most awful sanctions, the observance of an outward ceremony.

Baptism is, however, both a type or figure of regeneration, and in some measure connected with it. "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit;" that is, unless a man be admitted into the spiritual church of Christ, by that new birth of which the rite of baptism is illustrative; "he cannot enter into the kingdom

of God.” It is, indeed, at once a great evidence of the truth of the doctrine of regeneration, and strong illustration of its importance, that the rite by which we are admitted into the Christian Church, bears so close an analogy and reference to it.

Some, whose interpretation of this doctrine has been substantially consistent with the word of God: have yet, in their statements, exceeded the limits of scriptural truth, and have made many rash and unwarrantable assertions on this subject. Yet, however injurious such errors may be, the danger of the present times arises not so much from enthusiasm, as from an indifference to spiritual things. There is a sober sense of the doctrine, in which good men have been generally agreed; and, taken in this sense, it is justly ranked as one of the most important of Christianity, securing the interests of true holiness, equally from the carelessness of the world and the abuse of the enthusiast. This sense I cannot better express, than in the words of our Church, wherein the “outward and visible sign” of baptism is represented to signify “an inward and spiritual grace;” viz. “a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness;” for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.

The doctrine, thus interpreted, I propose, as the subject of our present consideration. It is not my intention to enter into an explanation of the new birth, but to offer some remarks on its genius and character, and to explain how Christianity is distinguished from other religions by this important article of faith.

I. The foundation of the doctrine of regeneration, is the acknowledgment of *human depravity*; for it is necessary we should be born again of the Spirit, only because we are totally corrupt in our natural state. Now the character which Christianity thus gives of mankind, is not to be discovered in any other religious system. I except, indeed, the Jewish religion, in which all the particular doctrines of Christianity were ob-

scurely delineated. But the religion of Jesus Christ, as it has required a degree of purity, such as was never taught before, so it has given a description of the depravity of man which, till its promulgation, was utterly unknown. The whole world, by which is meant all who are not regenerate, are represented as lying in wickedness, as in enmity to God, and as opposing truth; and this evil character of mankind is attributed, in the New Testament to the depraved state of human nature: "men are born in sin;" they are "children of wrath," and "under the curse."

That this representation of the state of the world is peculiar to Christianity, is sufficiently evident, and is indeed a very strong presumption of its Divine origin. The sad experience of our own hearts, when enlightened by the Spirit of God, our inability to conceive justly of the true nature of sin and holiness, are sufficient, independently of other proofs, to confirm the truth of what Jesus Christ and his Apostles have revealed on this awful subject. But to give so shocking a description of the state of mankind required in the teacher of a new religion, not only the deepest insight into human nature, but a measure of firmness and resolution which nothing but the confidence of truth could have inspired. What false teacher could have dared to give so unfavourable an account of his fellow-creatures? I might almost say, what person of a benevolent mind, who was not speaking by the immediate authority of God, could have done so?

But Christianity, though it probes the wound deep, does so with a pitying hand and with a kind intention. For from this description of mankind, which no one who has not put off humanity, can read without pity, or acknowledge without grief, is derived that humility which is peculiar to a Christian, and a train of virtuous dispositions connected with it which are only of Christian growth. Of *humility*, as a virtue, the heathens had so little conception, that the Roman language did not even contain a word to express it. That

poverty of spirit to which the kingdom of heaven is promised; that *contrition* for sin, and deep repentance, which are only the next degree below innocence; that *tenderness of conscience* which, knowing its danger, watches with jealous sensibility against the approach of sin; that *spirit of earnest supplication* at the Throne of Grace which in a posture so justly be-fitting man, humbly implores mercy; that *confidence* in the Divine help which they who distrust themselves will cherish, and which tends equally to ascribe glory to God and produce security to man;—all these virtuous emotions take their rise from that very affecting description of human depravity which Christianity alone has given.

How striking is the difference between some of the wisest of the ancient philosophers and those who are real Christians! Regard the former! conceited of their wisdom, boasting, confident, and vain glorious. Behold the latter! After all their present prayers, their works of piety, labours of love, and earnest endeavours to be more pure and holy; you see them still lamenting their depravity, and acknowledging with sincere grief their utter unworthiness. Is it that these men are really more corrupt and unworthy than the former? Or is it that their confessions are insincere? Or is it not that the pride of the human heart, which the Gospel proposes to eradicate, is removed; and the humility which the Gospel implants has taken root and flourished.

II. Nearly connected with the doctrine of the depravity of man, is that of the insufficiency of human righteousness to justify a sinner in the sight of God. This truth is also implied by the necessity of spiritual regeneration. And this is a doctrine which no other religion but that of Christ ever inculcated: on the contrary, however inconsistent the different opinions of the nature of virtue have been, whatever different methods men have taken to obtain it, still their whole dependence has been placed upon the sufficiency of their own

attainments. They have looked to their own virtue and goodness, to secure eternal happiness.

But how different, how much more noble, more worthy of God, and more suitable to man, are the sentiments which Christianity inculcates! We see in the religion of Jesus Christ, a regular design to glorify and exalt the holiness of the Divine Being, in the sight of whom the utmost purity of man is unclean, in whose holy balance his best works are found wanting. Forbidden to place any confidence in himself, and taught that every good desire and purpose of his heart proceeds from God; the Christian, while he is as holy as the frailty of human nature will permit, trusts not in his holiness, but, in consequence of his enlarged views of duty, sees so much imperfection even in his best services, that he gladly embraces the offer of salvation made to sinners, through the mediation and mercy of a Redeemer.

We may always suspect the truth of any article of faith which does not tend to produce good practical effects. Utility is among the surest tests of any doctrine; and in the case before us, not only is the Saviour's Name magnified, by a renunciation of our own righteousness, but a greater degree of purity results from it; for the absence of genuine piety seems to be chiefly owing to the opinion which too generally prevails of the sufficiency of human virtue. He who entertains a deep-rooted opinion that his own virtue must recommend him to God, is naturally led to establish a low standard of virtue, and to form a loose and general idea of holiness, as meaning little more than a freedom from acts of gross sin.

But when Christianity teaches man, that he cannot by any righteousness of his own obtain the pardon or favour of God, the intention is not to make him easy in the neglect of virtue. No! the Gospel overthrows a weak edifice, but to build on more secure foundations. It reminds man of the insufficiency of his works, that he may be induced to apply to Him who is the fountain of all sufficiency, and the source of all help. It

shows him the imperfection of his own righteousness, and leads him to mourn over it, that he may seek the purity of heart and life which is wrought by the influence of the Holy Ghost. It directs him with purer principles, with a better aim, with a surer hope and a more powerful aid, to attain a more elevated degree of holiness.

III. The influence of the Holy Spirit is the third particular, in the doctrine of regeneration, which marks the peculiar character of Christianity. The Gospel is emphatically styled, "the ministration of the Spirit;" "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." We are saved by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which is shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."

All religions which have any pretension to the notice of a rational being, agree in this point, that they require a degree of moral goodness in their votaries. But Christianity not only differs materially from them, by requiring in its disciples a degree of purity and strictness essentially different from that which is enjoined by any other religious system, but by referring to an Almighty Agent as the only source of this goodness. If the assistance of the Spirit of God holds out great encouragement, it no less increases our obligations and augments our responsibility: for the Gospel requires of those to whom this Divine aid is given, a measure of holiness, inconsistent with the natural state and powers of man: it demands such a change in their habits and principles, as may justly entitle them to the appellation of new creatures. Without this change it does not consider them as Christians. The flesh is, in the New Testament, opposed to the Spirit; that is, the natural state of man, to his state as recovered by the Spirit.

Christianity is not, like other religions, *national*: it is entirely *personal*. We are indeed, by birth, entitled to baptism, and to be admitted into the external church of

Christ; that is, we are admitted into a solemn covenant with God, in which we promise this personal change; and our hope of salvation depends on its taking place within our hearts. It is one of the elements of Christian science, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

Other religions have chiefly insisted upon the admission of certain *opinions or ceremonies*; and a person, according to his reception of the one and practice of the other, was considered as a votary of that religion, and entitled to its benefits. Even the Jews had fallen, in our Saviour's time, into a gross mistake of this kind, which our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount is chiefly intended to expose, and to shew that in the pure system he was about to deliver, though there would be doctrines and ceremonies, yet no observance of these could atone for the wilful breach of the least commandment. All the doctrines of Christianity, and all the ceremonies it requires, are of a *practical* nature: they tend to implant principles which will most powerfully produce practical holiness; and only in proportion as that practical influence is felt, are the doctrines of the Gospel rightly understood.

Other religions have made the principal part of duty consist in abstaining from certain crimes, and practising a limited degree of virtue; but Christianity requires much more: she insists upon her disciples being active in doing good. Their members they are to yield as instruments of righteousness and holiness; their bodies they are to present as a reasonable sacrifice unto God. It is not enough that they do no evil: they are to do good to all men: to consider their time, money, and influence, as talents with which they are to occupy till their Master calls them to account.

Other religions have been contented merely with an external practice, conformable to their rules: Christianity requires, that all the righteous actions of her servants should be done from the heart; not of constraint, but willingly. They must be the offerings of a free will; the natural dictates of the heart, and of an under-

standing so renewed as to approve and delight in them. The Christian's tempers are no less the subjects of reformation than his actions. A worldly temper is as contrary to his character, and as opposite to the nature and genius of Christianity, as an evil action. A general carelessness and remissness about our souls is represented in the New Testament, as not less culpable than positive acts of sin. In short, a Christian is one whose will is renewed to love God; who feels that the service of his Maker is at once his glory and his joy; who has a grateful sense of his obligations to the Divine mercy, and a rational and permanent abhorrence of sin. Influenced by just principles and noble desires, he is no longer a slave to the world or the flesh; no longer places his happiness in the gratifications of vanity, the luxury of ease, or the enjoyment of worldly pleasures. He looks up to heaven as his home, and he is training for it in the practice of all righteous duties which that seat of unsullied holiness requires. Such is the nature and purpose of Christianity—that religion which the Son of God came down from heaven to inculcate.

From this view of the change of heart which the religion of Jesus Christ requires, I proceed to derive some practical admonitions.

And first, I address the careless and worldly-minded. You will object to this representation of the design of the Gospel, and think that the benefits of Christianity may be obtained without this extreme strictness of life and purity of heart. But I appeal to yourselves whether what the Gospel thus demands of us is not a reasonable service. Can you expect that God should suffer his creatures to live on his bounty, and to partake of the mercy he has offered them, without a holy conformity to his will, without endeavouring to honour and serve him, to the utmost of their power, with the faculties he has given them? Can you expect that he will receive into heaven, that pure and holy seat in which he is peculiarly present, those who have not been prepared for that glorious mansion? The least se-

rious reflection must convince you, that God has given to man a capacity to serve him, and that he must therefore require from him a diligent and upright obedience. And what is that religion which the Son of God, coming down from heaven, must have been expected to teach? A religion consistent with impurity, or with ignorance, or with spiritual indifference? A religion, substituting the belief of mere opinions for holy practice? A religion, allowing a practice partially virtuous, and admitting the performance of some parts of duty as a compensation for the neglect of the rest? No: it is evident, that in a religion taught by the Son of God himself, no insincerity could be admitted; that he could not have quitted the scene of his glory to teach a system in which the highest faculties of man, his will and his affections, were to find a partial or subordinate exercise. He came to purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; and the sum of his commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves.

But while I therefore inculcate on the careless sinner the absolute necessity of Christian holiness, let me not forget, that amongst my hearers, there are probably many upright but humble and diffident persons, who are truly desirous to serve Christ, though they feel and lament the difficulty of subduing the corruption of their nature. I would remind them that it is peculiar to the Gospel of Christ, to afford hope and encouragement to the humble. Let not this description of the extensive nature, or perfect degree of Christian holiness, lead you for an instant to consider Christ as a hard Master, or his service as an unreasonable bondage. His yoke is easy, and his burden light. He has considered, he does consider, human infirmity. "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth we are but dust." And therefore, though he cannot dispense with this sincerity of heart and practical holiness in his disciples, he has amply furnished them with means to attain it. For

this end he offers the influence of his Holy Spirit to those who earnestly seek it. That high degree of holiness, also, which is required, is to be the result of a long continued progress. The strength of mature age cannot be expected in an infant, nor the perfection of holiness in the infancy of the spiritual life. The Christian is one who makes a constant progress from grace to grace. He "counts not himself to have apprehended; but, forgetting those things which are behind, he reaches forth to those which are before, and presses towards the mark for the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus."

And though infirmity still cleaves to human nature, and corruption defiles its best intentions, yet through the atonement of Christ "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." It is peculiar to Christianity, that though it requires holiness, it yet dispenses pardon: that although it allows not insincerity, it yet shews compassion to the penitent sinner. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." It is peculiar to Christianity, that the believer may know the extent of his deficiencies, see his extreme unworthiness, be filled with shame on account of his sin, and yet abound in joy and peace in believing. Thus in every respect, Christianity bears the image of its great Parent, spotless and pure, yet at the same time mild and gracious; too righteous to admit of wilful depravity, yet too merciful not to admit repentance, and provide salvation for those that repent and believe.

Such, then, is Christianity, a lovely copy of the goodness, mildness, purity, and excellence of the Divine Nature. Christ, its author, displayed his own character, the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth; and it was his intention to impart to all his disciples his own resemblance and image. What manner of persons then should Christians be, in all holy and godly conversation? But, alas! what must we say to those Christians, who are living in the world as if they

were of the world; who, instead of considering themselves as pilgrims and strangers on earth, who have no abiding city here, set up their rest in this life, are immersed in earthly things, are making no moral improvement, are strangers to earnest prayer, to a holy temper of mind, to a conformity to the will of God, who, in short, are Christians only in the name and form of worship, while their spirit, temper, maxims, views, and conduct, are just the same as if Christianity had not been revealed? Alas! what can we say of such, but that they have a name to live and are dead? For where is that personal holiness, that purity of heart, which the Gospel requires? They want the very essential characters which alone constitutes the title to Christianity. A lifeless, nominal Christianity, has been the great evil of the world; nor can any general or solid reformation take place, till the distinction between real and pretended Christianity is clearly understood, till the genius and character of the Gospel is studied, and the power, rather than the form, of godliness becomes the object of our desire. This great and fundamental distinction, the doctrine of regeneration is well calculated to explain. It alarms the careless sinner, and confounds the self-deceiver: it allows of no sin, nor permits the absence of any virtue. Its immediate tendency is to put an effectual stop to every evil way, to administer a thorough cure to spiritual diseases, and to form and fashion us after the image of Christ. Such are its practical effects; nor can the danger of neglecting it be described in more awful terms than the Great Judge of the quick and dead has used in the words of my text: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

SERMON VII.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

Ephes. ii. 8—10.

By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

WHEN it is said, that salvation depends on our faith, and not on our works, a very strong objection will immediately suggest itself:—"What, then, are good works of no avail to salvation? Do the righteous by their holy and excellent lives, establish no better claim to heaven than the profligate and profane? Is not this repugnant to common sense? Is it not contrary to all our ideas of the justice and righteousness of God? Is it not a doctrine dangerous to the interests of morality, depreciating the value of a good life, and encouraging the wicked presumptuously to expect salvation in opposition to the many plain declarations of Scripture?" Such are the objections which unavoidably force themselves

upon the mind, and which, without doubt, would be of the greatest weight if they were founded upon a correct statement of this doctrine.

No truth, I can conceive, can be more just in itself, more consonant to reason, and more fully established in Scripture, than that "without holiness no man shall see God." The uniform tendency of revelation is to inculcate purity and righteousness. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." At the day of judgment, the righteous will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven; and the wicked will be shut up in outer darkness, to dwell with the devil and his angels for ever. "Jesus Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

If, then, there appear to be assertions in Scripture inconsistent with these declarations, which either represent good works as unnecessary or depreciate their value, such assertions must be understood in a qualified sense, or at least must be explained so as to accord with the declarations of an apparently opposite kind: for Scripture cannot contradict itself, but must speak a uniform and consistent language. I conceive, however, that nothing is necessary beyond a clear and just statement of the doctrine of salvation by faith, to shew that it is perfectly consistent with the strong assertions of the inspired writers, respecting the necessity of holiness and good works. For this purpose I shall endeavour to lay before you a brief explanation of this doctrine.

The Eleventh Article of our Church affirms, that "we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most whole-

some doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

I quote the words of our venerable Church, not merely because they explain her doctrine—though that consideration ought to have the greatest weight with us—but because, as forming an article of our national faith, they will necessarily have more authority than the opinion of any individual, and because they contain a summary of the faith professed by every Protestant Church at the period of the Reformation. Indeed, the doctrine of justification by faith alone was one of the fundamental points in which the Reformers differed from the Church of Rome; and so important was it esteemed that it was termed, by Luther, the article according to the belief or denial of which a church might be said to stand or fall.

If the holy Scriptures had not spoken plainly and decisively on this subject, the doctrine in question would scarcely have been asserted thus strongly by the reformed churches. But these assertions are amply justified, both by the express language of the revelation and by the whole analogy of the Christian faith.

The language addressed by St. Paul to the Ephesians, is very strong. "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." Nor was the statement of the same Apostle to the Galatians less remarkable: "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." To the Philippians he wrote: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of

the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He instructs the Romans, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

These passages are strong and decisive, and their meaning seems too obvious for dispute or uncertainty. Yet we may be still more clearly satisfied that we have not misunderstood them, when we consider the other evidence afforded by St. Paul's Epistles, that the opinions of our own Church on this subject were held by the Church of Christ in the time of the Apostles. The objection which is now so frequently urged against this doctrine, was not less forcibly advanced when it was first promulgated. "We be slanderously reported," says the Apostle; "and some affirm that we say, Let us do evil, that good may come." It is evident, therefore, that the doctrine which the Apostles preached seemed at first sight to afford some ground for the imputation made by the enemies of Christianity, who, either through error or malignity, insisted that it tended to promote licentiousness. For had the Apostles preached *only* the necessity of virtue and a holy life as the qualifications for heaven, with what colour of reason, or under what pretence, could any persons have charged them with teaching a doctrine which encouraged sin? It is still more remarkable, that St. Paul himself perceived that such an imputation might be made with at least some degree of plausibility, and therefore anticipated and fully repelled it. In the sixth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, after having stated the doctrine with great precision, he proceeds immediately

to inquire what would be the first and chief objection to which it would be open. "What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" And again; "Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace?" Having thus proposed the difficulty, he then satisfactorily removes it, by shewing that the Gospel afforded no licence for continuing in guilt; but, on the contrary, exacted in the strongest manner, the mortification of sin, while it provided a deliverance from its power. But at present it is more material to observe, that by bringing forward the objection prominently, and by shewing that it was founded on an erroneous and imperfect view of the Gospel, it is plainly implied that there was in the doctrines of Christianity something which did give some plausible countenance and colour to such a conclusion.

These passages, selected from many more of a similar kind, are quite sufficient to prove, that in the justification of man, his good works are in some sense entirely devoid of any efficacy. But single expressions, however strong, may be misunderstood; and it is more satisfactory, if the truth of any disputed doctrine can be confirmed, by shewing that it does not rest on solitary or insulated passages, but is embodied into the very fabric of Christianity, and made a component part of its general system. Now such a proof may, in the present case, be fairly drawn from that doctrine which is confessedly peculiar to Christianity, which is interwoven into its very substance, and is held forth in every page of its records: I mean that of Jesus Christ having come into the world to be the Saviour of sinners. Now if we examine that fact carefully, we shall find that it necessarily supposes and implies the truth of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. For if a Saviour is appointed, for whom is he appointed? Evidently for those who cannot deliver themselves from destruction. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The death of

Christ was to be a sacrifice, a propitiation for sin: His blood was to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now what do these expressions imply, but that men are to be saved, not as meriting heaven by their own innocence or virtue, but as sinners rescued by a Saviour from destruction. The claim of salvation by our works, is indeed utterly incompatible with the hope of salvation through Jesus Christ. In applying to a Saviour, we in effect renounce the plea of innocence; we confess the charge of guilt; we ask for pardon and mercy. Thus, there are two different systems of salvation. Of one, our own virtue is the basis: the foundation of the other is faith in Christ. He who embraces the first, pleads his innocence: he who trusts to the latter, confesses his guilt. In the former of these characters, there is a self-satisfaction; in the other, a spirit of humiliation and contrition. The one claims reward; the other sues for pardon. The one depends upon himself; the other relies upon a Saviour's death and intercession on his behalf. The one appeals to God's justice; the other throws himself upon his mercy. The one claims heaven as a right; the other asks it as a gift, of which he confesses himself to be unworthy. The one boasts of his integrity; the other is deeply humbled for his transgression. The one trusts to his own merits; the other renounces his own righteousness, confesses himself a guilty sinner, and seeks for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Hence it is evident, that the system which requires faith in Christ, and therefore renounces the merit of our own obedience, may be easily misunderstood or misrepresented as undervaluing good works, because it does not make them the ground of our hopes of salvation.

All that is said, then, of the inefficacy of good works for salvation, is said with reference only to our justification before God. If we are forbidden to plead our good works, as our recommendation to his favour, it is for this valid reason, that no man living can offer to the pure and holy God—to Him in whose sight even the

heavens are unclean, and who chargeth his angels with folly—such a degree of righteousness, as he can accept. It is ignorance of ourselves, of the purity of the law, and of the holiness of the nature of God, which alone could lead us to exalt ourselves in his presence. We are sinners in his sight, and he therefore requires that we should be saved as sinners; that we should acknowledge our guilt; that we should feel contrition for our sins; and that we should humbly ask for forgiveness for the sake of his Son, and not assert a title to heaven as a right.

It has often appeared to me a very striking proof of the Divine original of Christianity, that it has exhibited a plan of salvation so very different from what it is probable man would have devised, which, however, when fully understood, is so perfectly consonant to reason and to truth; a plan which is exactly adapted to the true state of man, and which most highly exalts the attributes of God. The common sense of mankind seems naturally to lead them to think, that we must obtain the favour and avert the displeasure of God, by a life of devotion and innocence. This opinion seems so obviously just, and so consonant to the feelings of mankind that it is scarcely to be supposed, that if men had invented a system of religion, and particularly if good men had been its authors, it would not have been founded upon this principle. A system, however, is produced, which is directly contrary to this fundamental assumption, and which is built upon the opposite supposition of the inefficacy of man's righteousness to recommend him to the Divine favour. Let us, then, examine this system. In what light does it consider man? In what light does it represent God? Does it exhibit views of the condition of man and the character of the Deity, which, when they are properly understood, are consistent with truth and reason? With respect to man it represents him as a sinner. It declares, that all mankind have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Let the truth of this declaration be de-

cided by an appeal to every man's conscience. Who can lay his hand upon his heart, and say he has never done wrong; that he is not chargeable with sin? Let its truth be examined by experience. Look at the state of the world, and judge whether all men have not been chargeable with guilt in the sight of God. These statements of the inefficacy of human merit in obtaining the favour of God, clearly indicate also their Divine original, by the very sublimity of the ideas which they convey of his holiness. There must be an infinity in every Divine attribute; and this system exalts the holiness of God to an infinite degree. It represents the purity of his nature to be such, that he can accept nothing but what is absolutely perfect. He considers all men as sinners, and the least taint of sin is odious in his sight. There may be, indeed, a great difference between one man and another: one may be comparatively righteous, and another comparatively wicked: but before the infinitely holy God, all these shades of difference vanish; all are in his sight unclean. In his presence all are guilty sinners. The very best man living has to answer at the judgment-seat of God for innumerable transgressions. Yet he has appointed a way in which men, although thus sinful and impure, may be saved. He therefore forbids the plea of righteousness, and requires humiliation in all his creatures. "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." How sublime is this representation of the Divine purity! How clearly does it prove itself to be consonant to the Majesty of Infinite Holiness!—But this view of the purity of the most High also tends to glorify and illustrate another attribute of the Divine character—his infinite goodness. For although God could not consider man in any other light than as guilty and sinful, yet such was his infinite goodness, that he sent his only-begotten Son upon earth to take upon him their nature, and to make atonement for them by his death on the cross, that thus he might save, through him, those who in his holy eyes

were the objects of displeasure and aversion, and whom he could not save on their own account; that thus "he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Such a view of the system of salvation appears, in my own mind, so honourable to God, and so plainly carries with it the seal and impress of Divine holiness and majesty, that I cannot but assent to it as coming from God, both on account of the honour which it pays to him, and the sublime views it exhibits of the Divine character.

This account of the nature of salvation will tend to dissipate the obscurity which might seem to prevail, respecting the doctrine of the insufficiency of our own works to make atonement for our sins; as well as to reconcile any apparent contradiction between that doctrine and the general obligations of Christians to cultivate holiness and obedience to God. A holy and righteous life is not only recommended, but required in every page of Scripture. It was the design of every Prophet, and of every Apostle, to inculcate and to sanction such a life in the strongest and most effectual manner. It was the very end of the Gospel to produce it. The disciples of Christ are to be a holy generation, distinguished by their purity and their good works from the rest of mankind. But in their application to God for pardon, they are to renounce all high ideas of their own character; they are to humble themselves before him, and to sue for forgiveness as sinners; for in his sight they are guilty and miserable, and laden with iniquities. And in truth their own humility, and their just views of the perfection of the law of God, will lead them to see themselves as indeed sinners in his presence. A lively sense of their own deficiencies (which will be always more lively in proportion as they increase in the love of righteousness and in knowledge of the extent of the obedience they owe to God) will prevent their ever thinking of themselves in any other light than as unworthy sinners. They will therefore

never extol themselves: they will never magnify the merit of their own obedience; they will abhor every proud conceit of their own virtue: they will, with the Publican, rather cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" than with the Pharisee, "God I thank thee that I am not as other men are." Both their knowledge of themselves and their knowledge of God will inculcate lowliness of heart, and will teach them to ascribe it to the grace and mercy of God, if they are finally made partakers of his salvation.

Thus understood, the doctrine of salvation by faith alone contains in it nothing unreasonable and nothing which tends to depreciate the general importance of good works. If a man believes that the good works which he has performed, or may yet perform, can never be of sufficient value to recommend him, by their own intrinsic excellence, to the favour of the holiest of Beings, does he for that reason disparage them? Does he consider them as worthless? No: he acknowledges their value, while he laments that he has fallen short of that excellence which his very humiliation tends to exalt. He still looks upon them as useful and necessary in every view, except as affording a ground of his justification before God. He sees that they are necessary, because God requires holiness in all that approach him; and he therefore concludes, that though obedience to the Moral Law cannot establish for man a title to heaven, it may yet be equally necessary for the completion of other purposes in the Divine economy. Although it is not the basis of our justification—it may, notwithstanding this, be neither the less necessary nor the less important. The ground only, on which it is necessary, and not the necessity itself, is here in question.

The reasons which shew the necessity of righteousness and good works are innumerable, and of the utmost weight. They are truly acceptable to God: without them none can be admitted into his kingdom. They qualify us for heaven, although they do not form the ground of our admission into it. They honour

God, while the want of them dishonours his holy Name. They are the necessary fruits of a true faith: for as the Twelfth Article of our Church declares, "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, inso-much that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruits." They are the guards of our peace: for we deceive ourselves, if while we continue in sin, or do not abound in the fruits of righteousness, we enjoy any religious consolation. They are of the greatest utility to our fellow-creatures, as well as the evidences to them of the sincerity of our faith. They are the objects of every real Christian's solicitude, desire, and hope. It is his most ardent wish and incessant endeavour, to be holy, even as his Father which is in heaven is holy. He hates and abhors sin as the greatest of evils. It is his grief and burden, the cause of all his suffering and all his sorrow; and it is his one great object in life, through the grace and power of Christ, to be delivered from the corruptions that are in the world through lust, and to be made partaker of a Divine nature. But in all this, the principle from which he acts is the desire to please and serve God, from a grateful sense of the value of Christ's salvation, and not a blind hope to present to God such an obedience as he may justly esteem entitled to the reward of heaven. In a word, good works are not so valued by a real servant of God as to be in his mind inconsistent with the glory of Christ as a Saviour, the holiness of God as a Judge, the purity of his law, or the infirmity of man as a sinful fallen creature. Wherever there is a humble mind, and a real penitence for sin, there good works will be considered with the highest honour, though they will not be substituted in the place of Christ as a Saviour.

That this is the view inculcated in my text, will appear from the explanation of it in detail. "By grace are ye saved;" by an act of the mercy of God, not from a claim upon his justice, as though they who obtain this salvation were righteous and deserving of heaven: "through faith;" that is, while we are saved by Divine grace alone, it is faith which is the instrument of salvation. Faith humbly relies upon Christ as the Redeemer. Faith, acknowledges the value of his death, and the efficacy of his intercession. Faith ascribes all our salvation to him, giving glory and honour to him as our only Saviour. Faith renounces self, that God and that Christ may be exalted: "And that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." The words "and that" have been differently understood. Some commentators make them relate to faith, and understand St. Paul to say, that even "that faith" is not of ourselves. Others interpret them as relating to the whole of our salvation, which the grammatical construction of the original words seems rather to favour. It is immaterial which interpretation is preferred. Either of them shew the mind of the Apostle to be intent upon proving that we are not to be saved by our own merit or power. Every thing which contributes to our salvation, even our faith, is humbly to be ascribed to the power and grace of God. "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Salvation is not to be considered as procured in any measure by the merit of our own works; and for this very important reason, that man may not be able to arrogate to himself any title to reward before God. Salvation must be an act of God's mercy, for which man must be ever deeply under a sense of obligation to him, and for which he must ascribe praise to God throughout eternity. But it would be inconsistent with such a state of heart if man should attribute any thing to himself. We must be laid prostrate before God as sinners, and saved in that posture of humiliation. "Boasting," says the Apostle, in another place, "is excluded." By what law? Of works? "Nay, but by the law of faith."

If men exalt a good life in their own esteem so as to expect their salvation from it, they may suppose that, even should their opinion be erroneous, their mistake would be harmless and unimportant. But let them be assured, that such an expectation will be not less dangerous than deceitful; it will be dangerous, because it is inconsistent with that humiliation which is indispensably requisite in sinners, with that frame and temper of mind which are necessary in the system of salvation. If Christ be the only Saviour of the world; if the song of heaven be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, by thy blood;"—then should the same acknowledgment be made by his redeemed people on earth, and they also should unite together in ascribing their whole salvation to him. But self-righteousness, or boasting, is inconsistent with such an acknowledgment. Whatever good works are performed by the people of God, are the effect of their faith in Christ. They first approached him as penitent sinners, confessing their guilt and imploring his mercy. Having redeemed them from the curse of the Law, he imparted to them the grace of his Holy Spirit, to form and fashion their souls anew, after his own image, to create in them all holy affections and dispositions, to excite the love of holiness and the practice of it. They "are his workmanship"—the fruits of their faith, no less than their redemption, are his own gracious work—they are by him "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that they should walk in them." Their deliverance from sin, no less than their redemption from death are entirely and exclusively the work of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus, therefore, while the Christian scheme exalts the value and excellence of good works, and enjoins them by the most solemn sanctions, it does not admit that they are in any sense meri-

torious. It at once glorifies God, and humbles and sanctifies man.

From this view of the inefficacy of our holiest actions to work out our salvation, let us learn to draw near to God in a spirit of the deepest humility. Before him let us renounce our own merit, looking only to his mercy, and to the intercession of Christ. But God forbid that these considerations should lessen our estimation of practical holiness and piety! We must press after them with the earnestness of men who know that they must perish unless they become holy. We must hunger and thirst after righteousness. Till we "walk with God" in a holy life, we must never cease to distrust our state before him. Thus pursuing good works with a right spirit, and for the right end, seeking them in the strength of Christ, desiring them as the evidences and the fruits of faith in him, acting from a principle of attachment to him, and aiming to promote his glory, we shall attain the true Christian end. We shall produce "the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

SERMON VIII.

ON THE NATURE OF TRUE RELIGION

Romans xiv. 17.

The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

WHEREIN does true religion consist? No inquiry is more important than this; for it involves our happiness, not only in the present life, but in that eternal state into which we must soon enter. Now, independently of the knowledge of the character of God which we derive from the Scriptures, it might reasonably have been concluded from the relation which he bears to us as our Creator, that he would not leave a subject so important to his creatures in uncertainty. The most important truths are generally the most simple and plain; and that which materially concerns the happiness of mankind, it seldom requires great attention or unusual discernment to discover. Yet, although God has given to us a revelation to ascertain the real nature of religion, no subject has been the occasion of greater doubt and controversy. Religion was supposed by many, in the time of the Apostles, to consist chiefly in oblations in abstaining

from the use of several kinds of food, or from the touch of various unclean things. "Touch not, taste not, handle not;" were with them some of the most essential precepts in religion; and it is in opposition to their opinions that the Apostle declares the kingdom of God not to consist in meats and drink—in the using of them, or in the abstaining from them.

The most frequent error, respecting the nature of religion, has consisted not so much in proposing something which is essentially contrary to it, as in selecting a part of it, and substituting that part for the whole. No one ever thought that religion consisted in lying, swearing, or stealing. There must be something plausible, something resembling the truth in any error which is long or widely received. Now, in fixing upon some part of religion, and magnifying its importance till the rest appear of little account, there is a foundation on which the fabrick of error may rest. In the case before us, the legal oblations, abstinence from particular kinds of food, the observance of new moons and sabbaths, and of various other rites and ceremonies, had been ordained by God: they constituted a part, and only a part, of true religion under the Levitical dispensation: they were rather means to religion than religion itself. Yet, from an undue estimate of the importance of these duties, which they diligently practised, many of the Jews were led to flatter themselves with a persuasion of their own superior sanctity, though they neglected the weightier matters of the Law—justice, mercy, and faith.

Their error, and the absurdity of it, we now clearly discern. We perceive that they had formed unworthy conceptions of the character of God, who they imagined would take pleasure in vain and useless ceremonies. They had narrow notions of religion itself; for they did not perceive that it consisted in the reformation of the heart, and in purity of life. They confounded the means with the end, not observing that all ceremonies are useful only as promoting some fur-

ther object, and that the end itself must be more important than the means by which it was to be pursued. They entertained confused ideas of the proportionate value of duties, unreasonably exalting those of the lowest kind, and depreciating some of the highest value. In all these respects we discover their gross mistake, and wonder they should have overlooked such obvious truths. We see that the nature of true religion resembles that of its great Author, that it glorifies God and sanctifies man; that whatever falls short of this, falls short of religion; and that whatever is substituted in the room of it, be it even a part of religion itself, ought to be rejected as unworthy of that sacred name.

But in this, as in most other cases, we are more clear-sighted in discovering the errors of others than of ourselves. Many, who condemn the Jews for having thought religion to consist in meats and drink, are themselves condemned in their own practice by the very principles upon which their censure of the Jews proceeds.

How many, at present, mistake the *forms of religion for religion itself*! They are punctual in their attendance at the house of God; they abstain from labour on the Sabbath; they repeat with regularity some forms of prayer, and therefore they doubt not of the genuineness of their religion. These are undoubtedly observances enjoined by God, and are therefore essential to real piety. The house of God was erected, the Sabbath set apart, and prayer appointed, in order that by those means man might obtain the grace of God in the heart. Yet these outward acts of worship constitute the form only of religion: the power of it consists in the purification of the heart, and in deliverance from evil dispositions. How many are constantly at the house of God on the Sabbath, who through the week are fretful and peevish, worldly and covetous, slothful and selfish, void of Christian love, heavenly mindedness, and holy affections! Yet they observe the forms of Christian worship, and are therefore satisfied with themselves. The very religion of such men at once tranquilizes their

consciences and hardens their hearts. Alas! of what use are the forms they practise, unless they produce the power of godliness in the soul. That worship which does not erect the kingdom of God and the law of God in our hearts, is in truth nothing better than a mere bodily exercise.

There are other persons, of upright and even of pious intentions, who seem to mistake the *means of religion for religion itself*. They are not, indeed, formalists: they are deeply sensible of the folly of resting in the mere outward acts of worship; but still they suppose religion to consist in habits and practices which are really important, only as they are made subservient to the growth of true piety. Such persons confine their views of religion to long and fervent prayer in public and in private, to the study of the word of God, to the perusal of religious books, and devout conversation with Christian friends. In these things they are frequently and deeply engaged. And greatly, indeed, is it to be lamented, that these important duties have fallen into so general a neglect. To this cause much of the wickedness of the present day must be attributed. Yet while I admit, in the amplest terms, the necessity of these habits, it must, at the same time, be observed, that they are but *means* by which we are to obtain an *end*; and that the end, of course, is more important than the means. Prayer may be considered either as an act of homage to God, or as an act of supplication to him for the grace we need. In the former sense, it is an act of religion; in the latter, but a means of receiving grace. Now wherein does that grace consist? In purity, in meekness, in charity, in love to God and man, and in the zealous discharge of the duties of our station. Yet how many imperious masters, idle servants, unkind husbands, undutiful children, and unfaithful friends, are zealous in their prayers, in attendance upon preaching, in reading the Scriptures, and in religious discourse, without, perhaps, a doubt of the genuine nature of the religion in which they confide.

There are others, whose religion consists in the *belief of the doctrines of Christianity*. They are diligent to know the whole system of the Gospel, zealous to propagate truth, and eager in combating false opinions. But why? Is it because they have experienced in their own souls the sanctifying influence of the truths they believe? Is it because they have themselves become more humble: meek, patient, gentle, and heavenly minded? Alas! it is often forgotten that *these* are the dispositions which the Gospel was intended to produce; and that the faith which does not produce them is dead, however orthodox it may be. The articles of our creed are doubtless of the greatest importance, and ought to be zealously maintained. But why? Because no others produce such excellent fruit in the life. Thus the doctrine of our *depravity* has an evident tendency to keep us humble; that of our *weakness* to make us watchful against sin, and stedfast in adherence to Christ; *the love of Christ* giving himself for sinners, constrains us to live in strict obedience to him: *his free forgiveness* implants a spirit of mildness and compassion in our hearts. Thus every doctrine is to be brought into action, and is important and valuable to us only as it produces corresponding and appropriate dispositions. Yet how large is the number of those who are more solicitous to have their faith sound than their hearts pure—who thus make the kingdom of God to consist in doctrines, which through our abuse of them, may be as unedifying as the traditions of the Jews about washing of hands and purifying of vessels, or their ordinances respecting abstinence from meats!

We have made no inconsiderable advance in Christian knowledge when we are fully persuaded of a truth so simple, that we might expect the most ignorant to know it—that real religion is seated in the *heart*, and not in the *understanding*; in the power rather than in the form of godliness. “Knowledge and faith are in order to practice: and we neither know nor believe to any good purpose, unless our knowledge and faith in-

fluence our conduct and make us truly better men. Let us live upon the great fundamentals of religion, and let not our attention to these be diverted by an intemperate zeal about lesser things. Let us not place our religion in disputable points and ineffectual opinions; but in those weightier matters of the Law and Gospel, which are of undoubted importance, and in which holy men, among all the different denominations of Christians, are better agreed than is commonly apprehended."

What, then, is religion? I answer in the Apostle's words; "It is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." As it respects God, it is righteousness; in its relation to man; it is peace; and as it regards the state of happiness we enjoy in our souls, it is joy in the Holy Ghost.

What, then, are we to understand by the term *righteousness*? There are some who sufficiently discern that forms of worship, religious exercises, and speculative opinions, do not constitute the whole of religion, but are rather means to obtain a higher end, who yet fall themselves into an error similar to that which they reprove in others.

They also substitute a part for the whole: a part of the end proposed to be obtained for the whole of it. They admit a loose interpretation of the nature of righteousness, and easily satisfy themselves that they have attained all that is required of them. Righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost mean little more, in their creed, than a freedom from gross acts of fraud, injustice and oppression, a general honesty of conduct in the business of life, a peaceable behaviour to our fellow-creatures, and the satisfaction arising from a good conscience.

Thus by setting before themselves a low standard, to which, by the help of a little partiality and some allowance for the infirmity of human nature, every man can accommodate himself, the purity, holiness, and

righteousness, which the Gospel enjoins, become almost empty names.

But true righteousness, as it is described in the Gospel, is of a higher and purer nature. It may be considered as consisting of these three things, indissolubly united; Christian motives, spiritual worship, and holy practice.

1. The righteousness which the Gospel enjoins is founded in *Christian motives*.—It is the motive which determines the value of an action; and the highest motives alone are sufficient to render our conduct truly Christian. The love of God—a fervent desire to fulfil his will, whether consistent with our own or opposed to it—a deep value for the unsearchable riches of Christ, and a permanent wish to promote the glory of God—must be deeply fixed in the heart, must regulate our whole conduct, must influence us to self-denial, and animate us to exertion in his service. They who are described as righteous in our Saviour's representation of the last day, are not so denominated, merely because they fed the hungry and clothed the naked, but because they did these things for Christ's sake. We are exhorted, whatsoever we do, to do it in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Husbands are to love their wives, *as Christ also loved the Church*; children are admonished to obey their parents *in the Lord*; servants are exhorted to be obedient to their masters *as unto Christ*, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but *as the servants of Christ* doing the will of God from the heart: "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" "I beseech you, brethren, *by the mercies of God*, that you present your bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." "*Having these promises*, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." The true Christian will feel the force of such expressions, as they describe the motives from which he really acts.

2. *Spiritual worship* is the natural fruit of Christian principles.—A truly righteous man must be a devout

man: all his principles inculcate the necessity of serious prayer. The knowledge he obtains through the Gospel, of the corruption and weakness of human nature, will powerfully lead him to pray to God, from whom alone he expects strength and mercy. His hunger and thirst after righteousness will manifest themselves in earnest supplications for it to the Throne of Grace. A cold and formal worship may seem sufficient to him, who has a partial and contracted view of holiness, and who is not habitually governed by the love of Christ; but he whose heart is affected by true Christian principles, will never be content, but when he abounds in prayers and praises to his Redeemer. He does not pray because he esteems prayer a duty, but because the dispositions of his heart naturally find utterance in addresses to God. "Seven times," says the Psalmist, "do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." He esteemed one day in the courts of God better than a thousand; for in his heart, as in that of St. Paul, the love of God was shed abroad by the Holy Spirit.

3. *Holy practice* is the necessary result of Christian principles and spiritual worship.—In proportion as the Christian abounds in knowledge and prayer, he receives power to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world: the fear of God influences every action; it manifests itself in a conscientious discharge of the duties of our stations, in a watchfulness over our passions, in a sincere endeavour to become acquainted with the will of God, and to perform it in the best manner we are able. The principles of religion are distinguished from every other motive by this, that they influence the conduct in every period and circumstance of life, without pause or intermission. In proportion as the general mass of our conduct is governed by these motives, in that proportion are we righteous persons. Although we should possess the purest principles, or should be carried out in the highest strain of devotion; yet whenever those principles and that devotion cease to influence and regulate our lives, we then want

that true righteousness in which the kingdom of God consists.

But in the description, given by the Apostle, of real religion, he includes *peace* as well as righteousness. By considering this context we shall see that by this expression the Apostle probably intended in this place a spirit of peace towards our fellow creatures.

It has of late been unhappily assumed by some, that love to man and love to God are distinct things, which have no immediate and necessary connexion. It is true that a degree of benevolence may exist without love to God or Christian principles: but it is equally true, that love to our fellow creatures, in its highest and purest state, can never be permanently seated in the heart, which is destitute of love to God: and that love to God cannot subsist without producing love to our fellow-creatures also: for the love of God is the love of goodness, justice, truth, mercy, and good-will, since these are the qualities which eminently reside in God, and by which we are acquainted with him. To love these qualities without possessing a measure of them is impossible. We can feel no real approbation of God's holiness, unless we are holy ourselves; nor of his goodness, unless we entertain sentiments of good will to those around us. The Scripture represents the view of God's perfections as having a transforming efficacy: "we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory." The Apostle concludes it to be impossible to love God, unless we love our brother also: "if we love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?" And the love of man is the natural effect of the knowledge we obtain of God through the Gospel. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." The peace which my text mentions, is a part of the religion I have thus described as consisting of *love* to our fellow creatures, because it is evident that peace arising from any other motive was not intended by the Apostle: for a spirit of

peace then only becomes a Christian virtue when it is directed by Christian love. We may live in peace with our neighbours from timidity of temper, which fears resentment; or from selfishness, which inclines us to avoid risk and trouble;—we may give them no disturbance even in their evil actions, while at the same time we are perfectly indifferent to their welfare. But the peaceable meek disposition of a truly righteous person is of a different nature. It is a copy of the meekness of Christ, bearing injuries without secretly indulging a spirit of resentment; pardoning trespasses, desiring the good even of enemies, “not rendering railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing;” and labouring to do good, though it may eventually be the means of contention: for as the Prince of peace forwarned his disciples, that he was not come to send peace upon earth, but a sword, so it will be found by his servants, that whoever is active in doing good, even with the purest motives, will frequently kindle the flame of strife and opposition. He who would live in perfect peace with the world, must allow men to live as they please, without reproof of their sin; but it is a part of that love, from which a Christian’s peaceable disposition is derived, to endeavour to stem the torrent of vice, and in a prudent and proper manner to rebuke offenders.

Lastly, The Apostle concludes his description of real religion, by representing it as *joy in the Holy Ghost*.

The Holy Ghost is emphatically styled *the Comforter*; and it is his gracious offer to bless and reward the works of righteousness and peace by communicating to the soul tranquillity and holy joy. “The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.”

Look at the real disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; examine his principles, and survey his actions, and say whether it is possible that he should not enjoy real happiness. His principles pure, his motives noble, waging war with every evil passion—the great source

of misery in the world—fervent in devotion, strong in faith, and believing the promises of God, abounding in hope, and fervent in good-will towards his fellow-creatures, how can he but be happy? Examine any one of these particulars singly, you will find it sufficient to fill the heart with tranquillity. *Benevolence* towards our fellow-creatures will produce it by depriving the heart of every angry passion, and leading us to sympathize in all the happiness of our fellow-creatures. The *hope of glory* will gild every prospect in life, and render all its afflictions light. *Trust in God* will impart abiding comfort to us, “for God will keep him in perfect peace who trusteth in him.” Above all, the *love of God* is an unceasing source of happiness; for this will make us satisfied with every dispensation of our Heavenly Father, and gladden our hearts in the view of his infinite goodness. But in the true servant of Christ all these means of tranquillity are united; every powerful motive to contentment; every source of pure and real enjoyment, added to the brightest hope of glory.

Alas! why are we so unmindful of the character and privileges of a real Christian? Why do we so little enjoy the peace of God? The answer is obvious: “We are deserting Him who is the fountain of living water, and hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns which will hold no water.” We seek for happiness in the world; we are not solicitous to have the kingdom of God established with power in our hearts, we are not true believers in Christ, and therefore we enjoy not the consolations of the righteous. But there is a peace which passeth all understanding. There is a joy in the Holy Ghost unspeakable and full of glory; and it is the shame of men, as well as their misfortune, that they know so little of this joy, and desire so little to obtain it.

In conclusion, let us learn to beware of narrow and defective views of religion. It is a subject which requires our loftiest conceptions. It is worthy of God, from whom it proceeds: it is most honourable to man.

whom it raises to be partaker of the Divine nature. How has it been degraded, and its glory obscured! What various parties and sects have singled out some minute part of it, and magnified that part to the disparagement of the rest, as if the truth of God wholly consisted in a form or ceremony, or a peculiar mode of worship. Let religion be taken in its full and proper sense, and all objections to it are obviated: it includes equally faith and practice, worship and holiness; love to God and love to man, duty to God, and duty to our neighbour; peace and purity of soul. It comprehends "whatsoever is pure, whatsoever is lovely, whatsoever is of good report." Let us not injure it by substituting a part, however excellent that part may be, for the whole of this Divine and glorious system. Christ, the Author of our religion, and the Pattern of all that are righteous, contained in himself and communicates to his people, the highest degree of excellence of every kind. His religion is a constant progress to perfection: it is at once the resemblance of that better state above, and a continued preparation for it.

SERMON IX.

ON THE POWER AND GLORY OF CHRIST

Col. i. 18, 19.

That in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

THE salvation of our souls is of such infinite importance, that we cannot be too solicitous as to the means of securing it. And when we are told that it must be effected, solely by the power and at the intercession of One who seemed in most respects a man like ourselves, and suffered an ignominious death, it is both natural and reasonable to inquire what extraordinary virtue he possessed, or whence he derived the wonderful power of arresting the arm of Divine Justice, and bestowing pardon for offences against God; of bidding the despairing sinner hope, and of promising to wretched mortals eternal life and the happiness of heaven. An answer to this inquiry is given in the words of which my text is a part: "We have redemption," says the Apostle, "through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." And to satisfy us, that the blood of Christ may

possess an efficacy to which no other atonement could pretend, the extraordinary dignity and glory of his nature are plainly revealed. "He is the image of the invisible God;" an image or likeness such as a mirror represents; an exact copy of the Divine original, resembling him in glory, in attributes, in dominion. "The first-born of every creature;" first born, not as being himself a creature, and merely the first of created beings, but as Heir or Lord of the universe—expressions which, as we learn from Justinian, were anciently synonymous with each other. This passage therefore corresponds with another of the same Apostle, in which Christ is styled "the Heir of all things, for," or because, "by him all things were created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible," as the lights of the firmament and all this lower world, "and invisible," as the whole host of spiritual beings, "whether they be" styled "thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created by him" as the agent, "and for him" as the end of their creation. "And he is before all things," in respect to his eternal existence, "and by him," by the constant exertion of his power and providence, "all things consist." And as he is thus the Lord of the universe by creation, so is he likewise by redemption the Lord of the church. "He is the Head of the body the church, who is the beginning;" the author of the Christian dispensation; the first born from the dead," rising as the first fruits of that resurrection to life and immortality in which his redeemed shall have part through him, and thus Lord of the church above, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence; for it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" all fulness of power to create, to redeem, to preserve, to govern, to save his people.

Here, then, we have the ground explained on which we may safely trust in Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour. It is Him, who is the image of the invisible God, and Lord of all things in heaven and earth, on whose atonement we are required to rely. It is to Him,

who is ordained to be head over all things to the church, that we are directed to look for victory over all our spiritual enemies. And indeed there is an obvious propriety in the appointment, that the same illustrious person who was the Creator of the world, should also be its Redeemer—that he who gave it life should be the restorer of that life when it was forfeited—that he who will judge the world at the last day should be the same person who both formed it by his power and redeemed it by his blood; “For if Christ was the immediate Creator and Governor of the world, what reason can be imagined why God should ever take this authority out of the hands of his Son, or set up another to have dominion over any part of the creation which by natural right belonged to him who made all things. Were we to consider one person in the Holy Trinity as our Creator, and another as our Redeemer, it would be extremely to the diminution of the honour and regard due to the Creator; for the blessing of redemption would greatly outweigh the benefit of creation, and it would be natural for us to prefer the love that delivered us from the evils and miseries of the world, to that which placed us in them.”* But now we see all those things which bear any relation to man, and call for his confidence, his gratitude, and his love centering in the same person. That Divine Being who breathed into us the breath of life, who has been our constant Preserver and our bountiful Benefactor; to whom we owe every blessing which renders life desirable; he it is who took upon him our nature, and redeemed us by his blood; he it is who intercedes in our behalf at the right hand of the Father; he it is who sends the holy influence of the Spirit to sanctify our corrupt nature; his presence is ever with us to defend and bless us; by his word we are instructed, by his ordinances edified, by his promises comforted and supported. Into his hands we commend our parting spirit; he receives them in the realm of glory; he shall raise our vile bodies and fashion them like unto

* Sherlock, vol .1. p. 48.

his own glorified body. And he too is the sole Judge of the world; who shall pronounce by his own authority the irreversible sentence by which we must be either admitted into everlasting bliss, or doomed to eternal punishment. Thus, with respect to man, he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End; the Author of all his blessings present, or in prospect; the great Object of his veneration, hope, and love. In all things he has the pre-eminence, and in him all fulness dwells for the creation, the government, the protection, the salvation of men.

Let it not be thought that while we attribute this pre-eminence, this fulness to Christ, we derogate from the honour and glory which belong to the Father; for it must be remembered that it is the will of the Father that, "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." It pleased the Father that "in him should all fulness dwell." "The Father judgeth no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son;" yet in the end all these offices of our Redeemer shall promote the Father's glory. This was the final aim and object of Christ; and it was his prayer, while on earth, "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify Thee." The mediatorial kingdom is entrusted to Him for this very purpose, "till he shall have subdued all his enemies under his feet;" till he shall have repaired the ruin made by sin in his Father's dominions, and restored the creature to the capacity of fulfilling the end of his creation, and of reflecting glory upon the God who made him. When this is accomplished, "then cometh the end when he shall deliver up the kingdom," the office and government which he received as Mediator, to God, even the Father: and "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." The α conomy of Grace shall be superseded; the Godhead itself, the Trinity in Unity, become the immediate dispenser of blessings, and resume the empire of the worlds. When we entertain the fear that we may derogate from the

Father's honour by ascribing so much power and glory to Christ, we do not sufficiently reflect on the union and identity of their nature. Suppose that an earthly monarch were to entrust the charge of some distant and rebellious province to his son, that he were to commit the government into his hands, and invest him with all the dignity and authority of the crown: this transfer of the regal prerogative would not necessarily detract from the father's greatness: it might tend to its support and extension: the province might afterwards be restored to its sovereign, freed from disloyalty, augmented in its revenues, more efficient in its resources, a support to the empire, and an ornament to the crown. Could it be said, that in this case the honour paid to the son detracted from the father's glory? Or rather, would there not be a perfect identity of the interests of the father and the son? In the mediatorial kingdom of Christ there is this identity. The union is mysterious indeed, and incomprehensible, but altogether complete and perfect: so that the Son is truly one with the Father, and the honour paid to the Son is virtually paid to the Father himself. It is according to his will, in conformity to his appointment, and tending to his glory.

But further, if we honour the Father without the Son, lest otherwise we should derogate from the glory of the Father, is there no presumption, no danger nor guilt, in thus rejecting the counsel of God, and taking upon us to be wise "above" and against "what is written?" Has he not himself given us a dispensation, according to which, "it has pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell" in the Son, and that pardon and life should be administered only through him! If such be the character of the revelation which he has afforded, it is surely our first duty to honour him in his appointed way, and thankfully to receive his salvation. The system of redemption is grounded on our character as sinners. Had we continued innocent as at first created, we might perhaps have worshipped God, without the

intervention of a Mediator; and the time will come when the Son having put all enemies under his feet, will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. But till that day shall arrive we live under a dispensation in which the Son is exhibited to us as the great object of love and adoration. He is our Creator—our Redeemer—our Sanctifier—our Governor—and our Judge; and to rebel against his authority, even under pretence of honouring the Father, may be considered as rebellion against the Father himself; for the only mode in which man can honour God, must be his obedience to his will; and when that will is plainly revealed, we must obey it, whatever it may be, without hesitation, dispute, or murmuring. The Jews had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; arising from partial views and unwarranted conceptions of the Divine nature and character. This zeal dictated their opposition to Christ. They put him to death, because “being a man,” he said “that God was his Father;” thus “making himself equal with God.” But they are held up as an awful example of the danger of rejecting the counsel of God, even through zeal for his attributes; and their house is left unto them desolate, till the day when they shall bow to the authority of Christ, and say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

This, my brethren, is not a subject of merely speculative theology: it is calculated to promote feelings the most essential both to our encouragement and to our progress in holiness.

1. It should lead us to adore that God who, with such unspeakable love, has provided for us a full, perfect, and sufficient atonement; not withholding his only Son, but giving him up for us all. Herein, indeed, was love—infinite love, such as could only have dwelt in the Divine nature, that in order to save us from destruction God “spared not his own Son.” Let none think that in our view of this plan of redemption the Father is represented as stern and unforgiving, and the Son alone as mild and gracious; the Father as rig-

crously just, while the Son yearns over us with compassion; the Father full of wrath, which the Son dies to appease: for the Scriptures every where represent each of these Divine Persons as concurring in the grand scheme of our redemption; as having devised and carried it on, from first to last, in concert with each other. As there is unity of nature, so is there an unity of will and disposition. In both, the love, the mercy, the compassion are equal. It was the Father who gave us so great and glorious a Saviour: it was *his* "will" which Christ came "to do" when, the inefficacy of all other expiation being declared, he laid aside his glory, and quitted the right hand of Majesty in the heavens, to shroud his Godhead in a veil of flesh, to dwell with rebels in a world of sin and misery; and at length to die by their hands, that he might remove the heavy curse which lay upon them, and redeem them to God by his blood. Then said he, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of me, to do thy will, O God."

Let us then adore *him*, when we contemplate the greatness and glory of our Redeemer, and the various offices which he fulfils, and the innumerable benefits which are derived to us from this unspeakable gift. We know comparatively little of God, but as we behold him in Christ: here his character shines forth most conspicuously. Angels strive to improve their knowledge of Jehovah by the contemplation of his love in our redemption; and shall not we adore him, who have all the benefit of this his inestimable love? While we enjoy the cheering influences of the sun, should we forget who fixed his orb in the firmament, and clothed him with light and glory, and bade his bright and vivifying rays shine forth on every planet within his system? And shall we be insensible to the goodness of him who bade the Sun of righteousness arise on this benighted world, with healing in his beams? No! let our praises continually ascend through Jesus Christ to the Throne of the Most High; and while we daily advance in our knowledge of the blessings contained in the Covenant

of Grace, let us adore the wisdom which contrived it, and the love which gave us a Saviour so entirely suited to our necessities, and so "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him."

2. Nor let the tribute of gratitude, of holy praise, and love be withheld from him who assumed so many offices in our behalf. What tongue of men or of angels can fully tell, what imagination can justly conceive, what heart can worthily feel the extent of our obligations to that Gracious Being, who, though by him all things were created, and though he was our natural Sovereign and Lord, yet, for our sakes, emptied himself of all his glory, assumed our nature, dwelt among us, became our instructor and example, and suffered an ignominious death on the cross for our sins; and who, rising from the dead, ascended into his native heavens in the character of our Intercessor and Advocate; that having atoned for our offences he might plead that atonement for us with the Father, and be the Agent from first to last in bringing his redeemed to glory.

Do we not owe to him, my brethren, our dearest hopes, our every enjoyment, the very life of our souls? Can any sacrifice for his sake be too great; any obedience be more than his due? Christ demands and deserves our hearts. Infinite have been his favours; unparalleled his love; and since all we possess has proceeded from him, he expects that in return we should devote it to him. He will not be satisfied with a cold form of worship. He requires our best affections and our highest confidence. "He that loveth father or mother, more than me is not worthy of me." If a man prefer even his own life, so as to renounce Him and his Gospel for the sake of it, he is not a true disciple: for the deliberate preference of any earthly object is in fact a dishonour to him. We are, indeed, seldom required to prove our attachment to Christ by the actual voluntary surrender of any beloved relative; but we are most justly expected to testify our love by a conscientious obedience to all his precepts. We are to attend

his ordinances, to read his word, to unite ourselves to his servants, and to regulate our whole lives by his example. Oh, my brethren, see that ye are not deficient in these evidences of regard to Christ! The hour is coming in which his favour will be of more worth to you than a thousand worlds. Let it not be discovered in that day that ye have been strangers to him, and have undervalued, or neglected, his salvation.

3. The preceding considerations may strengthen your dependence on the death of Christ for the pardon of your sins and the redemption of your souls.

We call upon you to rely on Christ as making a full atonement for your sins, and to commit your souls with entire confidence into his hands; and therefore we call upon you to contemplate him in all the various offices which he bears. He is our Creator and Benefactor, the Giver and the Preserver of our lives: by Him we shall one day rise again from the dead, and He shall be our final Judge. If we are delivered from any evil, our deliverance is effected by his power; whatever good is conferred upon us is the result of his bounty. He has all power in heaven and earth to accomplish everything for our benefit, and possesses every Divine attribute necessary for our security and welfare. He is with us upon earth to defend us with his loving kindness as with a shield; he is seated in heaven at the right hand of the Father, there to intercede in our behalf. He once became man for our sakes; yet, even in that state of humiliation, he performed works which clearly manifested his Divinity: though men rejected, angels adored him; though his body suffered from toil and hunger, yet that frail tabernacle was the residence of the Godhead. Even then he knew the secret thoughts of men's hearts—the devils were subject to him—he touched the eye of the blind, and it saw—he bade the deaf ear be opened, and it heard—he called, and the dead came forth to him from the graves—he commanded even the winds and sea, and they obeyed him. Whatever view we take of Christ, he exhibits

the same character of essential greatness and glory. In his humiliation he was still "God manifest in the flesh;" as Mediator he has all power for the salvation of his people; and as Judge, shall have authority to pass the final sentence and fix the doom both of his disciples and his enemies.

Each view affords some new display of his power and dignity. Each presents him to us as deserving of our highest confidence; each shews the efficacy and greatness of his redemption. He is thus proclaimed to be the Son of God, infinite in dignity, qualified to be our Advocate, as having power to prevail with the Father, worthy to receive from man, as he does from the blessed spirits above, all honour, and glory, and dominion, and majesty for ever!

In confiding our souls, therefore, to Jesus Christ, we trust in One who is almighty and all-sufficient and able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by him. Fear not, therefore, thou penitent sinner, who art justly sensible of the number and guilt of thy sins; fear not, but apply in faith to this omnipotent Saviour; and with all humility, and yet with exulting hope and joy, say—"In the Lord put I my trust." "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "In the Lord shall I "be justified, and will glory."

O blessed security, which is thus afforded to all who, with repentance and faith, trust in the Redeemer of sinners! The sense of that security will continually enlarge, as the knowledge of the glorious plan of salvation becomes distinct, and as the power and dignity of the Redeemer are better understood. Hasten, then, ye penitent sinners, to Him: "under the shadow of his wings make" your "refuge, till the calamities" of life "be overpast." Behold, he waits to be your Saviour! And having been both ordained and accepted by the Father, as the Atonement for sin, he offers you a free and complete salvation. Oh, perish not in your sins, while this Deliverer stands near, and is able and ready to communicate life and salvation!

4. And ye who do trust in Christ for salvation, forget not that in *all* things he is to have the pre-eminence. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." It is not, therefore, enough that you rely on him for the pardon of your sins; your application to him must be for every blessing of which your souls stand in need. Do you want wisdom, strength, or grace? He "of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The life of a true disciple of Christ is a continual exercise of faith in him; or rather, it is he who lives and works in the believer. "Christ dwells" in "his heart by faith." "I am crucified with Christ," he exclaims with the Apostle: I am in myself dead and powerless, like the body of Christ when hanging lifeless on the cross: "nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." O blessed union of the disciples to their Divine Master! By this precious faith they become one with him, and he with them: they thus dwell in him, and he in them.

[This union is abundantly manifested by the holy emblems of the Lord's death which are now set before you. On this point I need not enlarge. As our bodies are strengthened by the food which we eat, so are our souls nourished by faith in the body and blood of Christ given for us. God grant that, being united to him by a living faith, our souls may indeed be refreshed and strengthened by our participating in this most holy service!]

Yet, while I indulge that hope on behalf of each of you, my brethren, I must not forget that there are many nominal Christians, who, either from indifference respecting their salvation or from a vain confidence in their own imperfect righteousness, do not address themselves to Christ as their Saviour, have no communion with him, and are even jealous of the honour rendered to him by others. Let such reflect that they are sin-

ners; and that if their sins are pardoned, it must be in the way which God has appointed. If they do not believe the Scriptures, they incur a tremendous responsibility; they are exposing their souls to eternal and inevitable perdition, unless that volume is false which others most assuredly believe to be a Divine revelation. But if they profess to believe in the word of God, then there is a strange inconsistency in their conduct. What infatuation has possessed you? Do not these Scriptures testify of Christ as the only hope for lost sinners? Do they not continually set him forth as the son of God; sent to be the Saviour of the world? Is not He the illustrious person to whom all the Prophets as well as Apostles bear witness, that there is salvation in no other; that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved? Shall we, then, at once believe this testimony, and neglect Him concerning whom it has been given? Shall we cast contempt upon God's appointment, by treating it as unimportant or unnecessary. Let us not, my brethren, incur this danger to our immortal souls. Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life; and no man cometh unto the Father but by him."—God grant that we may all draw near to God through Jesus Christ, and thus attain grace in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting!

SERMON X.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

(PREACHED ON EASTER-DAY.)

Phil. iii. 21.

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

THE mind is naturally desirous of inquiring into the changes we are likely to undergo in the different stages of our existence; and, indeed, it even becomes a duty to pursue such inquiries, since the hope of those changes is held out to us, that we may learn to submit with cheerfulness to exertions and self-denial; to bear the hardships of life without murmuring; to trample under foot, the vanities of this world, and to fix our affections on things above.

On this day, dedicated to the remembrance of our blessed Saviour's resurrection from the dead, the pledge and earnest of our own, I feel justified, there-

fore, in offering to your consideration a few reflections on that wonderful change which will take place, when "this corruptible" shall have "put on incorruption, and this mortal" shall have "put on immortality." On entering into such an inquiry, it is necessary to caution ourselves against indulging the vain wanderings of a fanciful imagination, instead of adhering to the written declarations of the word of God, the only source from which any knowledge, on subjects relating to the eternal world, can really be derived. It is also a salutary counsel, that in all such researches, we should lift up our hearts to the great Fountain of Wisdom, the Lord of heaven and earth, beseeching him to bless our feeble efforts to comprehend his goodness, and the glories of the kingdom which he has prepared for them that love him. So will those endeavours promote a higher love to his name, and a more fervent desire to please him in all holy obedience. —

In considering the nature of this change in the human body, in the successive stages of its existence, we may first remark, that every thing in this fallen world carries within itself the principle of its own dissolution. All things degenerate and perish in the course of time. The spreading oak loses at length its luxuriant honours: the trunk decays, the branches wither, and it exists the outline only of its former greatness. Such also is the gradual destruction of the human body. Each succeeding year robs it of some beauty, and impresses upon it some mark of mournful decay. The strength fails, the health sinks, the knees totter, the spirits flag, the courage droops, the fire is quenched, the vigour gone. But, on the other hand, we may observe, that the power of God is continually exerted to renovate his material creation. He recalls the sun; and the world, long buried in the grave of winter, is revived—and spring, in all the freshness of youth, fills every heart with joy. After the dreary darkness of night, he restores to us the light of morning, to rekindle the painted landscape; and the gilded scene glitters with

brightness, and all nature awakes to life and animation. If we examine the animal world, we may have there also the continual operation of the same renovating power. We see the almost lifeless egg transformed into a creeping insect, and endued with perceptions and faculties, which, after a short season, appear to be extinguished by death. But from this state of seeming annihilation we again behold it: no longer crawling upon the ground, but soaring in the air, with increased beauty and renovated strength. From the analogies of nature we might, therefore, conclude that if God revives at all the lifeless body of man, a glorious improvement in its state would be effected, and his Divine agency manifested in a splendid transformation from death to life, from weakness to power, from dishonour to glory. And revelation confirms this natural anticipation. "He shall change our vile body," says the Apostle, "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." What expressions are these! What sublime views do they open! What glory do they reveal! "Like unto his glorious body. Like to the glorified body of the Son of God, in which he appears to the blessed angels; in which he sits exalted on the throne of Heaven, at the right hand of God! This body, when St. John beheld it, was bright with light, like the sun shining in unclouded splendour,—a body worthy of the person and the place,—like his own Divine nature, incapable of suffering, not exposed to decay, clothed with effulgence, so that even heaven itself is illumined by its splendour! That "city" has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof!"—Other kings and potentates anxiously appropriate all external grandeur to mark the distinction between their subjects and themselves: they array themselves in gorgeous apparel and costly magnificence, and endeavour to awe and dazzle the rest of mankind by outward splendour: but the King of kings and Lord of lords, high in that essential glory which no exterior

magnificence can augment, and which no plainness can diminish, distinguished from his subjects as the beneficent Source of whatever blessings they possess, rejoices to communicate to them of all that adorns himself; grace for grace, glory for glory, bliss for bliss! "Because he lives they shall live also;" because he reigns they reign also! He rejoices to impart his own resemblance to them, that as he is glorious they may partake of his glory. The splendour of his kingdom consists in the splendour of his subjects, and in the profusion of that bounty from which their splendour is derived. They were found by him poor, and wretched, and weak, and defiled, outcasts from the dominion of God, with his curse resting upon them. But when the work of his benevolence is completed, he shall present them unto the Father as a "glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;"—partaking of his perfection, resplendent with his excellencies, and arrayed with the same beauty which adorns and exalts the Son of God. Their perfection constitutes his glory. And how is this perfection attained? It is by rendering them conformable to his own image. He dwelt amongst men in their own garb of flesh, that they might see and imitate him. He was humble that they might learn humility from him. He was full of tenderness, that they might be filled with the same compassion and disinterestedness. He was elevated above this vain and sinful world, he conversed continually with Heaven, and sought only to do his Father's will, that they might learn from him to die to the world and live to God. He forgave all injuries, and bore with patience all sufferings, that they might learn in like manner to forgive and endure. Thus were their motives gradually assimilated to his; their objects to those which he pursued, and their conduct to his example. But in many the conformity did not terminate here: they gloried in being conformed even to his sufferings, and died as martyrs for his sake. Yet the most perfect resemblance which his disciples could attain in

this state of being was incomplete. Though the principles which he instilled into them were identified with those from which he acted, there still remained an infinite distance between the disciples and their Lord. The mighty "working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself," could not fully operate in this scene of humiliation. They had seen their suffering Master, but they were yet to behold their triumphant Lord; they had viewed him hitherto as Man, they were now to behold him as God: they had been partakers with him in his humiliation, they were now to triumph with him in his exaltation. And, as before they were changed into his image, even by the spirit of the Lord; so now beholding his image, they are made like unto him in his glory. They are to be like him, for "they shall see him as he is." By beholding his glory, glory is reflected upon them; by viewing his perfections, those perfections are insensibly communicated to them. They gaze and admire till they discover in themselves the glorious likeness of what they adore in him. "Such honour have all his saints."

And here let us pause, my brethren, to contemplate the amazing extent of this change. The body had been laid in the grave, the victim of the curse, the prisoner of death, the prey of worms, its vanity departed, its glory extinguished! All was dismal solitude and hopeless despair; when lo! at the Saviour's voice, which even in the days of his flesh called Lazarus from the tomb, they spring up to new life, they burst the bars of the grave, they awake with every faculty renewed, exalted, perfected: they see their Lord, and wear his image. What power less than Divine could effect this? But the power of Jesus is Divine. His Divine energy subdueth all things to himself; and to Divine Power nothing is difficult, nothing is great, nothing is impossible. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," they awake and are changed. Let us not, then, my brethren, shudder to be laid in the dark mansions of the tomb: let us cheerfully submit to the disso-

lution of our frame, the pangs of dying, the loss of our senses, and the temporary separation of the body and the soul. Faith will dispose us to regard these descending steps of humiliation, as steps in our progress to glory. Let our thoughts be wholly fixed on the infinite power and the boundless goodness of Christ, and upon the glory to which we shall ere long awake. Oh, beloved Saviour, how are we indebted to thee! How does thy name disarm death of its sting, and the grave of its horror! How are we indebted to thy goodness for all we have or hope for! In thee we place our whole trust and confidence; and who would not joyfully resign himself to death, knowing that it is the appointed means of beholding thee face to face, and participating in thy glory?

The particulars in which this great change consists are thus described in Scripture: this *corruptible* puts on *incorruption*; this *mortal* puts on *immortality*; this *natural* body becomes a *spiritual* body; and the *body of sin* is renewed in *righteousness*.

1. *This corruptible shall put on incorruption.*—I would not presume to depreciate the body which God has created. It is a fabric contrived with consummate skill, to answer the purposes for which it is designed. But it was not intended to be perfect; and after the Fall it was doomed to corruption and death, as the just consequence of its condemnation. I would speak with reverence of every work of God, and particularly of this which so much illustrates his power and wisdom. Yet, after all, it is a corrupt body, it is a "vile body;" or, as the original expresses it, a body of humiliation; and carries within it the seeds of decay. It becomes the receptacle of disease. By its very construction it tends to dissolution. It is soon disordered, and affects by sympathy the mind which is the partner of its burdens. At length it falls a victim to its inherent corruption. Disease exhausts its power, and it sinks into the grave. But the renewed body shall be incorruptible;—there shall be found no seeds of decay—no gross corpo-

real particles: no liability to disease, and no tendency to dissolution. It shall be contrived by the power of God to endure unconsumed by the ravages of time, unexhausted by fatigue, independent either of medicine or rest: like the soul, its glorious companion, it will bloom in perpetual youth and flourish in imperishable vigour. To the power of God nothing is impossible. He can create an incorruptible body, possessing in itself the principle of its own renewal and increasing perfection, with the same ease that he can create a perishable frame tending to its own gradual and rapid decay.

2. In like manner *this mortal shall put on immortality*.—An irreversible sentence has doomed this body to death. The execution of this sentence may for a little while be suspended, by vigilance, care, or the art of medicine; but at length, all science and attention fails, all struggles are useless, and the grand destroyer takes possession of his victim. Then every earthly hope and interest is extinct. Death arrests all improvement, it checks our progress towards perfection, it dissolves the most tender alliances, and breaks up all the plans of life. To be perfect, therefore, we must be immortal—and in the life to come that immortality will be given us. There we have not to dread a violent termination to good and great designs—a sudden extinction of knowledge acquired and digested with anxiety and labour. We may then anticipate ages after ages rolling on in endless succession. We may conceive designs, not such as the scanty limits of a life which is but a span will allow, but plans commensurate to boundless existence and endless ages. Every thing will be grand, because every thing will be eternal, and partake of the grandeur of eternity. An immortal life consumed in holy designs affords scope for all that is great and sublime; for infinite enlargement and perfection, for boundless good, and immeasurable glory.

3. But, thirdly, this body must undergo an entire change.—It is now *natural*, or material; it must become *spiritual*. A natural body is gross, dependent

upon matter for its subsistence, needing continual supplies of material food; seeing, and hearing, and speaking, and perceiving through the medium of corporeal substances; and even thinking, desiring, hoping, and fearing by the agency of perishable matter. But flesh and blood are too gross, too earthly to find entrance into that kingdom where every thing is pure, perfect, and imperishable. Hence, a spiritual body will be prepared by the power of God suited to a spiritual world. It will see, but not by rays of light received into a material eye: it will think and feel, but not by material organs. Instant communication, rapid conception, uninterrupted intercourse will be required and enjoyed. The spiritual body will be all sense, all feeling—space and time, distance and absence, will then interrupt no more the communion of saints. Their pleasures will be purely spiritual, adapted to a spiritual kingdom; to that kingdom where all is intellectual, and where no objects of sense debase or distract the mind.

4. But great as are these perfections, they would all be perverted, or become useless, were there not still a farther change: *the body of sin shall be clothed in righteousness.*

Righteousness is the just and right constitution of the mind, pursuing things excellent according to the degree in which they are so, and conforming itself to the image of the holy God. Now, sense is the grand inlet to temptation—the medium of what is vile and corrupt. The judgment here often approves what the will, disordered by sense, does not choose. And this vile body has been so long tainted by sin, and has so participated in the corruption of the fallen soul, that we need a holy and spiritual body—a body renewed in righteousness after the image of him who created it. We shall awake then with this new body, perfect in righteousness; without a desire which is not excellent, without a feeling which is not pure. The *will*, then, will be the inseparable companion of the judgment; choosing and loving what the judgment ap-

proves. The *judgment* will be enlightened and correct; discovering with unerring certainty what is right and holy. The *imagination*, purified from all disorder and extravagance, will combine its enchanting power with the judgment to display every thing good in its true and brilliant colours. The *memory*, faithful to its trust and to its God, will receive no impressions which are corrupt, and retain for ever all that are excellent. The sanctified *affections* will be fixed only on what is pure: we shall *love* with an intense ardour whatever is the object of Divine approbation: we shall *rejoice* with a joy as pure as that of angels, in every thing that is holy. Every affection, every faculty of the soul will harmonize with the will of the Saviour; every power be consecrated to his service; “where he is, there we shall be also;” we shall dwell in his presence, and continually communicate with him, and, beholding his glory, shall be transformed into his image. But the mind is lost in the mere contemplation of the grandeur and completeness of the change. Hitherto, we have seen nothing complete. Here the very best things are imperfect; there the very lowest are perfect. But I dare not proceed: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

Such happiness, such glory, my brethren, do we owe to the Saviour who died for us and rose again. Such was the joy he had in view, when he “endured the cross, despising the shame.” Oh, what heart can conceive the extent of our obligations to him! Would to God that I could say, that all acknowledged and felt this obligation; but many, alas! think lightly of his blessed work, of his sufferings, and of the glorious kingdom which that work and those sufferings have procured for us. They neglect him, and therefore can have no share in his great salvation. Oh! dreadful infatuation, that blessings so infinite, so permanent, purchased by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, should be all forfeited because we do not desire or seek them

My brethren, let not this folly be yours. Oh! set before you selves the immeasurable joys, the glorious life, which I have been feebly endeavouring to describe. Impress upon your minds the important reflection, that this great change must be begun here, to be perfected above. Here are to be found all the elements of the happiness, the glory, the holiness of heaven: here is begun that conformity to Christ, in which the very essence of the change consists. As in the transformation of the insect, the wings, the limbs, the organs, already folded up and existing in embryo, require only to be expanded and displayed; so all that the glorified spirit enjoys is possessed here, though in a lower measure by the real Christian. He requires only to be delivered from what is gross and corporeal, in order that his spiritual graces may be fully expanded and brought into action. He enjoys, even here, that faint resemblance to Christ crucified, which is the foundation of all the rest: the faith, and love, the spiritual joy and hope, the taste for what is excellent, the desire of what is pure, are all found, though in an imperfect degree, even in this world. Let these through the power of Christ their Author, be developed and expanded, and the man becomes an angel. The union to Christ, begun here, when perfected above, completes the work, and the saint is fitted for the society of heaven. O, then, my brethren, of what infinite importance is it that we now labour after that sacred image; that we cleave to Christ, that we become partakers of his grace, that we be united to him by a living faith! Let this cheer you that are devout servants of Christ, amidst the difficulties of your pilgrimage: remember that you are sowing the seed of an eternal harvest, that you are becoming incorporated with him who is the Life and the Truth, and that you will one day reign with him in his everlasting kingdom.

And let me not conclude this discourse, without calling upon you afresh to offer up your gratitude and adoration to that Saviour to whose resurrection we owe so

much. "Because he lives, we shall live also;" because he rose from the dead, we shall rise also. He is the source of all life, and hope, and joy. Well may the praise due to him be eternal, since the obligations are infinite. Let our eye and our heart, then, be ever directed to him; and let us here begin that continual ascription of praise which is the grand, the most delightful employment of the spirits of just men made perfect.

SERMON XI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRIVILEGES.

1. Cor. iii. 21—23.

All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours: and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

IT is useful as well as curious to observe, under what different aspects the world and the circumstances of the present life are surveyed by different persons. The politician considers the world as the scene of political changes: he contemplates the laws of civil society, the state of parties, the resources and power of princes, and the stability or decline of governments. The soldier regards it as the field of war: he estimates the powers of annoyance or means of defence which a country possesses. Men are, in his sight, mere instruments to be used in the struggle for glory: renown in arms is life in his estimation, and to die in the field is to sleep in the bed of honour. The man of business considers the world as the place for the acquisition of

wealth: he calculates the opportunities it offers for commercial enterprize, values time with reference to the returns of his capital and the progress of his speculations, and confounds life itself with the means of providing what is necessary for its support. The gay and dissolute estimate life by its pleasures and amusements: the world is the theatre of enjoyment, and time is measured by the round of diversions it enables them to pursue. The unhappy man, on the other hand, sees in the world nothing but sorrow and calamity: life with him is the capacity for suffering, and time is the measure of grief. He looks forward to death as the termination at least of present sorrows, whatever be the fate of man hereafter.

It may, however, be observed, that men in general do not form such estimates of life as I have here stated, purely and abstractedly: for their views as their dispositions, are generally mixed and compounded. Thus the man of business, when unsuccessful in his pursuits, will combine with his habitual views of life as the scene of gain, a melancholy persuasion that it is the scene of disappointment also, and will thus too often cherish that worldly sorrow which terminates in despair and death.

I need not remark to you, my brethren, that each of the estimates of life which I have noticed, is essentially erroneous. The word of God affords the only criterion by which we can form a just judgment of the world. For as God alone can take a general survey of the whole extent of human affairs, he only is exempt from those errors into which we are continually betrayed by our partial views and our very imperfect comprehension of the little we are permitted to see. In each of the cases to which I have referred, the influence of this source of error may be distinctly perceived. But when we derive from the Scriptures our judgment of this life, we are taught to enlarge our views, to consider the relation in which we stand to God, and which the present life bears to our future and eternal existence.

The Bible directs us to take into consideration the fallen state of man, the designs of God towards him, the means used by the Redeemer for his restoration, and the final glory and happiness for which he is now in a state of preparation. It thus gives to the world, and to life and death, a new aspect and places their nature, their character, and their importance, upon a ground entirely different from every other.

Instructed, therefore, by the light of Scripture, the Christian looks upon himself and all his fellow mortals as fallen beings living in a world which lies under a heavy curse, and which, compared with its former perfect form, may justly be styled a state of ruin—a state in which therefore there is necessarily found confusion, misery, and disappointment, and in which evil in all its various shapes is continually producing death as the natural termination of a short and painful existence. He considers the moral ruin of the soul as still more lamentable in its nature and consequences than that of the external state of things; he beholds the understanding disordered, the judgment perverted, the affections degraded, the heart hardened, the conscience stupified, the image of God lost, the soul a miserable captive to sin and Satan. But by the same Divine light the Christian discovers that God, in his great mercy, has not left his creatures in this forlorn state; that he has formed and sent his Son into the world to execute a plan for their complete restoration to happiness and eternal glory; that God who cannot lie has given the promise of salvation to those who believe in this great Redeemer, that being thus reconciled to God through the blood of his Son, he regards them as his children, and will defend and protect them from every danger. The Christian is therefore taught, though he must still live in the world as in an enemy's country, and still be subject to many perils and great difficulties, yet that God will cause all things to work together for his good, turning even his sorrows into blessings, till he and all the redeemed people of God

shall at length be made more than conquerors over every evil, and enter into the long-desired possession of eternal rest and glory.

Every Christian, therefore, views the present world not merely as it is in itself, but as it is connected with this great plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the error of other men in forming their estimate of life, to confine their thoughts to what they observe in the present state of existence: it is the wisdom of a Christian to extend his view, and to consider life in connexion with that glorious salvation which appears, in his eyes, the one and great concern to which every thing else should be made subservient. The world in itself presents a scene of never-ending changes and revolutions, of feuds and bloodshed, at which the heart sickens; of insatiable desires and unwearied struggles for wealth; of follies ever varying, and endless vanities still renewing; of miseries and sorrows, disappointments and anguish, following the steps of man as his inseparable attendants. But in what light does it appear as connected with the salvation of the soul? Its aspect is totally changed; it becomes a school of discipline in which God places the heirs of salvation for their improvement and growth in grace: in which their evil passions are corrected, and the low and sordid desires of their nature are exchanged for pure and noble principles; where the troubles of the world are sanctified, and converted into trials of their proficiency and means for their further progress. It becomes a theatre of instruction, in which are continually exhibited striking examples of the truth and excellency of God's precepts, the vanity of earthly pursuits, and the folly and evil of sin.—It becomes a scene for the display of the bounty and goodness of God to those whom Christ has received as his disciples. For them all the various means of religious improvement are provided; to them support is given under every trial; to them innumerable promises of Divine help are afforded; the Spirit is imparted from above for them; in their be-

half the Son intercedes in the court of Heaven, and death itself is but a friendly messenger to convey their souls to everlasting glory.

Such was the view of life which the Apostle entertained, when he reminded the believing Corinthians of the privileges they enjoyed. "All things are yours;" for your use, your benefit, or your improvement: "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

To elucidate these words further, it will be necessary to examine more in detail the particulars of which they consist; but I must first premise, that, in order to form a right judgment in spiritual things, the mind itself must be spiritual. If, in your estimate of good and evil, you adopt the opinions of the world, and those views which are indeed natural to all men, your judgment will infallibly be wrong: you will "call evil good, and good evil; and put light for darkness, and darkness for light; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." If you would understand the full meaning of the Apostle's language, you must therefore entirely lay aside all worldly ideas, all the views of ambition, of policy, of avarice, of pride: you must abstract yourself from the world and the corrupt passions of man. You must esteem the favour and approbation of God the only real good; the progress of the soul in holiness, and conformity to his image, the only true advancement; the eternal inheritance above, the only real possession; and the life to come, which will endure through millions of ages, when this vain world and all its empty scenes will have long been forgotten, as the only existence which deserves the name of life. The body must be uniformly considered but as the temporary abode of the soul: eternity must be preferred to time, and things spiritual to things temporal. That, and that alone, must be esteemed really good, which promotes our growth in grace and the salvation of the soul. In a word, every thing must be regarded as it is subservient to our eternal interests, and

the only value of life itself must be placed in its subserviency to this end. When your views are thus purified, when, according to the language of Scripture, the Gospel is the pearl of great price in your esteem, and you prefer Christ to father, mother, brother, sister, house or land; when, for his sake, you see it most reasonable to make every sacrifice, to pluck out the right eye or cut off the right hand; then only are you prepared to feel the force of the Apostle's reasoning, and to enter into the views which animated his mind in delivering it.

Then you will see, that if you are Christ's, '*all things*' are yours. You will behold such a rich display of the Divine goodness in the dispensation of the Gospel; such a provision for all your spiritual wants; such a subserviency of the order and administration of this world to the interests of your souls, that you will clearly perceive that the same beneficent Mind which has prepared heaven for the abode of the blessed, has also ordered and disposed this world for the use and advantage of his redeemed people, and with a view to their final and perfect happiness above, has given them the real use, and the fullest enjoyment of all things even here.

Then, also, will you discover that the ministers of religion are yours, '*whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.*' Their office was ordained by God for your improvement in spiritual knowledge and grace. An awful responsibility lies upon them: for they are to answer in a certain sense for your souls. They are warned and exhorted, therefore, by every alarming and affecting consideration, to declare to you the whole counsel of God; to set before you life and death; to exhibit the light of truth, and to admonish the sinner of his evil ways. For your sake were given the various talents and capacities they possess, the miraculous powers of Cephas, the eloquence of Apollos, the zeal and love of Paul: to your advantage their studies are directed, and their labours and prayers employed.

Though in one sense the ambassadors of God, they are in another but servants to you, attending continually upon this very thing, and living for your improvement.

Hence we may learn the folly of ranging ourselves in parties under the standard of men, as if they, instead of Christ, were our Leaders. When one saith, "I am of Paul," and another, "I of Apollos," how low and degenerated an idea has each of his true state and privileges. Who, then, is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers sent by the great Lord and Head of the church to feed the flock which he has purchased with his own blood? Learn to consider yourselves as the flock of Christ only. Call no man on earth master, for your Master is above, reigning in the courts of heaven; and this is your glory, that you are called by his Name, and not by the name of any frail mortal. Yet how has the Christian world been divided, and its peace destroyed, by the adoption of the names and tenets of particular ministers, as the badges of different parties in the Church: I am of Calvin, and I of Arminius, and I of Luther. Would to God that it had been always remembered that Christians are of Christ alone; and that all ministers are weak and fallible men, whose office is only to direct the minds of men to the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, and his Gospel.

But as ministers are yours, so also are "the world, and life, and things present."—Yours is the *world*. It is intended for your use, it is adorned for your enjoyment. The world was never formed to gratify the purposes of ambition; that warriors might parcel it out to raise themselves a name, and mark out its boundaries by the blood of its inhabitants. It was not created to satiate the lust of wealth, to minister to pride, to gratify a sordid avarice and selfish joy. It was not designed by its great Author to be a scene of dissipation and unhallowed pleasure, nor, on the other hand, to be an abode of woe and wretchedness. The world is abused whenever it is used for these purposes. But

yours is the world, who use it for those ends for which its gracious Creator formed it; who survey its delightful scenery, its mountains, its valleys, its rivers, and feel that they are yours, because they were made by him who is your Father. The world is yours, who receive the bounty of Heaven with a thankful heart, and employ it as God has intended, to your own lawful advantage and the good of others. The world is yours, to enjoy it with moderation thankful for the conveniences it affords you while a pilgrim and a stranger in it, in your way to a better and heavenly country. The world is yours, who enjoy the blessing of God upon all your possessions, and occupations in it, and possess in your souls the peace of God which passeth all understanding. That peace will gild every gloomy scene, and enable you to submit to the trials of the world with resignation; knowing "that all things shall work together for good to them that love God," and that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more enduring and eternal weight of glory."

Life is yours also.—You have the true enjoyment of it, who consider it but as a short interval allotted to you for the purpose of working out your salvation. You are well aware that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things he possesses, but in obedience to the will of God and in the enjoyment of his presence. To live is, in your estimation to discharge conscientiously the duties of your station; to watch diligently over the state of your minds; to mortify and subdue every evil temper and corrupt passion; to employ your time, your influence, and your talents in promoting the glory of God and the good of your fellow creatures; to maintain communion in your soul with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; to advance daily in the knowledge of the truth, and be in some measure better prepared to participate in the employments of the blessed spirits above. This is life; for this is the true enjoyment of it. He who considers life in this

view, and employs it thus, will enjoy a true peace of soul, because his existence will be employed to the noblest purposes—the most usefully to others and the most advantageously to himself, because he will live in the way which the Lord of life has prescribed to his creatures.

Things present—that is, all the occurrences you meet with in the world, all the several events in life—are yours. Many of them may, indeed, upon a hasty glance, appear disastrous; and you may adopt the language of the patriarch, “All these things are against me.” “How,” you exclaim, “can the injurious reports of calumny, the aggressions of insolence, the abuses of power, the attacks of disease, the loss of friends, be ever for my advantage?” Yes, if you judge upon right principles; if you value growth in grace more than any temporal enjoyment; if you regard submission and patience under suffering as highly acceptable to your God and Father; if you feel the necessity of weaning your affections from the world and fixing them upon things above; if, in a word, you have respect to the greatness and duration of the world to come, and regard every thing here as good or bad only as it respects your eternal interests;—then you may welcome with a holy tranquillity the evils of life, and with the Apostle, “count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”

In the same view, *things to come* are yours.—If we restrict these words to the events which may befall us during our continuance in this transitory life, this is our sure consolation, that however adverse they may prove, in the common acceptation of the word, they will be under the direction of our Heavenly Father. Here we are at anchor, amidst the tempests which agitate this unstable world. We know not what may befall us; but of this we are aware, that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” But no event can happen by chance—none but what is wisely appoint-

ed—none under which we shall not receive Divine support, if we humbly seek it—none which will not eventually prove for our advantage, when our advantage is rightly understood. This is the eminent security which a real Christian enjoys. His mind is kept in perfect peace, because it is stayed upon God. He has learnt to pray from his heart that the will of God may be done; and he therefore leaves every event to be directed by Him on whose wisdom and goodness he reposes with filial confidence and unshaken tranquillity.—But things to come may be understood in a larger sense: we may extend our view of them through countless ages, and behold the whole series of events ordered and directed by the Lord of the Universe for the benefit and consolation of his people.

This will further appear if we reflect, that even *death* is yours, if ye are Christ's. Behold what a change takes place through his power; what a new creation springs up under his benignant hand! Death was inflicted on man, as the curse of his offended Creator: death was the last and most formidable evil—an evil of unknown magnitude, for no light shone from the dark regions beyond the grave: death has been the dread of every reflecting mind, the termination of every visible joy, the limit of all our schemes and hopes: but, through Christ, death is now become to his disciples the beginning of life, the entrance into immortality, the dawn of glory. Oh! could we be indulged with one glance into the bright realms of bliss—could we survey for a moment the excellent order, the exalted employments, the perfect pleasures, the uninterrupted peace, the glorious perfection, the pure society, the light and knowledge, the love and obedience, which prevail in those happy mansions—we should indeed say, that death was gain, and to depart and be with Christ far better than to live in this evil world.

And now, my brethren, let us review this goodly prospect—this fair inheritance which is given to you through the infinite bounty of your God. "All things

are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours;"—yours by the free grant and charter of him who ordained them all for your use, benefit, and improvement. What are your feelings while you survey this enchanting prospect? Do you doubt whether the fallen children of Adam can really acquire in their present state this glorious inheritance? Do you fear that it is an illusion? If, indeed, we were to judge by the practice of the world, we might suppose so: if we were to form our opinion by the complaints we daily hear of the miseries of life, we might justly pronounce it such; but if we judge by the revelation of God—if in our more retired moments we contemplate what is really good, and survey the vanity of all that assumes that name in the world—if we carefully examine, by the light of the word of God, the tendency of all his dispensations to ennoble and exalt mankind; we shall be compelled to own that it is but a plain and faithful representation of what the bountiful Redeemer has done for his people.

What, then, are the just inferences from this representation?

1. It should teach us to abandon the views of life which our own hearts suggest, or which we acquire from our intercourse with the world. Let temporal things become less valuable in our esteem. Let us pursue them with less avidity, be less anxious about the enjoyments of the world, and less depressed with its troubles. This world and the fashion of it passeth away. Man himself "fleeth as it were a shadow, and abideth not in one stay." Why then all this anxiety? Why these fears of the trials of life? Why this immoderate joy in its pleasures? Does not this intensity of mere worldly affections prove that the heart needs correction? Is not this view of life entirely faulty? Are we not judging according to outward appearance? Are we not preferring time to eternity, the body to the soul, worldly prosperity to spiritual improvement? Learn.

then, to think more of another life, and less of this; to see the world as the Scripture represents it, as abounding only in vanity and vexation of spirit, as perpetually deceiving and disappointing. and then only the scene of real enjoyment when used in conformity with the will of God, and in subordination to his grace in the soul.

2. The second general inference from the preceding considerations is, that we should try all our opinions by the standard of truth given us in the word of God. A Christian has much to unlearn, and much to learn. The views and maxims he has acquired from the world are generally false. Until his feelings entirely correspond with those inculcated in the Sacred Writings, he has not acquired a true and Christian judgment. Every thing must be considered by us in reference to our souls and the glory of God, and must be measured and valued by this rule. This is the first maxim of Christianity, and differs entirely from what we are taught in the world. Our Christian improvement, then, must be our first object; reliance upon God our first duty, obedience to his will our chief study, and the life to come our brightest hope: the love of Christ our ruling principle, and the glory of God our steadfast aim. Then we shall act aright: for we shall see the world, and life, and death, in their true colours, and shall no longer be misled by the meteors and phantoms which delude the frivolous and the ungodly.

3. We may learn, from what has been said, to abound in gratitude to God, and to derive a steady tranquillity of mind from confidence in his mercy. All nature calls on us to be thankful; for on what side can we look where we see not the tokens of the Divine goodness displayed? The sun shining in the heavens, and the moon and stars illuminating the night, declare the glory of the Lord, and shew forth his goodness to man. The earth is spread beneath our feet with grass for the cattle, and green herb for the service of man. On this side is the great and wide sea, in which sail

the ships conveying the bounty of Heaven from one climate to another. There the luxuriant harvest bends to the sickle; here the woods are rising to supply the wants of future generations. Look back, and say, if goodness and mercy have not followed you all the days of your life; look forward, and behold what glories are prepared for you at the end of your journey. Open the Book of God, and every page is rich in mercy and consolation: open the treasures of the Gospel, and say if more could have been given than God has bestowed on his redeemed. Christ is their Advocate, the Holy Spirit their Comforter, God their Father, heaven their home. Let us, then, gratefully adore the goodness of our God, and learn to confide in him. To him let us commit ourselves, our families, our future prospects: "He that spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

But while you admire the bountiful goodness of God, forget not why it is bestowed upon you—"All things are yours, for ye are Christ's." The gift of so rich an inheritance to those who are so unworthy of it, might justly excite surprise; but the Apostle assigns the reason: "Ye are Christ's." It is the relation you bear to the all-meritorious and glorious Son of God, which procures for you so large a gift. For the sake of his beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased, he opens the treasures of his goodness, and glorifies his Son in exalting us. Because we are brethren to Christ, therefore we are the sons of God. For Christ is God's: he is the only begotten of the Father, the brightness of his glory; and on account of his voluntary humiliation, the Father has highly exalted him, and assigned him a kingdom, in which he and his redeemed servants reign in glory. This, then, be your unceasing aim, to be found in Christ. Would you know whether that great object has been attained? Examine your own hearts by the test which the Scripture has given you. They that are Christ's hear his words: they re-

receive him for their Lord and Master—they crucify the flesh with the lusts and affections thereof—they purify themselves even as he is pure. Such is the description of their character. They approach him, indeed, at first, as ruined sinners, who, having no hope but in his infinite mercy, cast themselves at the foot of his cross to obtain pardon and grace. Thus they become his, and this union to him is continually maintained by fervent prayer and by continual application to him as the source of their life and hopes. Thus by him they are enabled to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, and to become partakers of his promises. Flatter not yourselves, then, that you are entitled to this goodly inheritance unless ye are Christ's; and deceive not yourselves, by thinking you are Christ's, unless you are living a life of faith in him, and walking as he walked. But if this be indeed the case; if in reality and truth you receive him as your Saviour and Lord, if you are ever looking to him with humble dependence, and if with faithful diligence you are obeying his holy Word; then let not your heart be troubled, neither be afraid, for you have a glorious inheritance. Then, whatever be your condition in this life, you have enjoyments truly divine and a peace which the world knoweth not. Then "all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

SERMON XII.

ON THE UNIVERSAL INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES.

Matt. vi. 22, 23.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light: but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

THIS metaphorical declaration of our Lord may be thus explained;—The eye is the lamp or light of the whole body. From it all the other members of the body derive their light. If, then, thine eye be clear and unclouded, thy whole body will be full of light; every limb will be moved with alacrity, precision, and certainty. But if thine eye be distempered, dim, and confused, thy whole body will be full of darkness; every motion of the body will betray the want of light: the feet will stumble, the step will be unsteady, the hands will miss their aim, the gesture will be still and uncertain. If, therefore, that which is the light

of the body be darkened, how miserable will be the state of the body! How great will be that darkness, not of the eye only, but of those members which have no light of their own, but depend entirely on the eye!

Such is the literal explanation of the metaphor. Let us now consider its figurative or moral sense. What, then, does our Lord intend to represent by the eye? Our Divine Instructor is reproving the practice of amassing treasures upon earth, and arguing against it from their tendency to engross the heart; for "where your treasure is there will your heart be also." And the evil of having the heart thus engrossed consists in this: The heart or affections regulate and influence the whole conduct. The state of the heart is to the moral man what that of the eye is to his body. As an eye clouded by disease has no distinct perception of external objects, and is therefore unfit to guide the motions of the body, so the heart set upon the world cannot perceive eternal or spiritual objects, and is unable to direct or guide a man in a religious and holy course of life.

There is in most persons some predominating principle, some master passion to which the rest give way and are subservient, and which controuls and characterizes the man. In one, it is ambition; in another, covetousness; in another, the love of ease, of applause, or of pleasure. But, however various the different passions of men may be, they may all, with reference to religion, be comprised under two grand classes. In one, the heart is fixed upon God; in the other, the object of affection is self, under the various modifications of ambition, covetousness, the love of pleasure or of ease. And what are all the various passions which agitate mankind, but the influence, in a direction somewhat varied, of the same selfish principle? They are the same as to their origin, the same as to their religious effects, the same as to the glory of God and the grand end of man. Now, a truly religious

person is influenced by a principle essentially different from these; and this constitutes his distinguishing character. His object is to serve God, not to gratify himself; to do what God has commanded, not to indulge his own wishes; to live according to God's directions, not according to the dictates of his own corrupt passions; to glorify God, not to honour and exalt himself.

I do not mean to intimate, that wherever a man's heart is fixed upon God there will be no regard to his temporal interest; that he will cease to feel human passions, and become indifferent to pleasure and dead to the desire of improving his worldly circumstances. This is neither to be expected in the present stage of human existence, nor is it required of us. It is sufficient, if the desire to please and serve God possesses a preponderating influence; if it leads a man to study the will of God with a sincere desire to accomplish it; if every thing is made habitually to give way to religion; if he refuses to make no sacrifice, which religion clearly requires, and to perform no duty which it plainly enjoins: in short, if he receives the word of God in an honest and good heart—a heart disposed to act uprightly according to the commands of that word, and to bring forth all those good fruits which it describes and demands.

It is, however, necessary to distinguish the *sincerity* of the principle from its *strength*. As the principle of life is as real in an infant at the hour of its birth, notwithstanding his weakness, as it is in the man of mature age, whose strength and vigour enable him to perform the most active services, so there is a real principle in every true Christian essentially different from that which influences other men. It may yet be very weak; it may be mixed with much imperfection, debased by gross superstition, clouded by extreme ignorance, tarnished by errors and mistakes, overpowered by the occasional violence of unruly passions; but still it has a sterling nature which is of more worth than the most brilliant qualities, the most zealous exertions.

or the most splendid actions without it. It will ultimately prevail and flourish over all opposition; it will be like a leaven which by degrees leaveneth the whole mass: it will in the end bring every thought into subjection to the will of God. It is a seed implanted in the heart by God himself. Hence it is said of the real Christian, that he cannot sin: that is, cannot continue in a course of wilful sin: because he is born of God, and the seed of God remaineth in him.

This principle is a sincere and prevailing desire to please and to serve God, and without it there can be no real religion. Before, a man was living only to himself, seeking his own ease, pleasure, and advantage; he might perhaps worship God in a formal, lifeless manner, and study religion in a cold and speculative way: but his heart was in the world, or engrossed by selfish motives; but now he sees the excellency of God's service, he feels his solemn obligations to his Creator and Redeemer: he perceives it to be his bounden duty to honour God as his Sovereign: and he honestly endeavours to pay a faithful and unreserved obedience to his commandments. His conscience now becomes his guide, and directs him to act according to duty rather than interest:—and under the influence of this principle, in proportion to his light and strength, he begins to amend what he sees amiss in himself; to renounce sin, however alluring; to struggle with corruptions, however powerful; to resist habits, however painful. In a word, he now becomes, in deed and in truth, a disciple of Christ: he honours and loves his Master; he serves him as faithfully in secret as in public, during the week as on the Sabbath day, and amidst the busy engagements of the world as in the retirement of the closet. His heart is right with God, and his delight is to do his will.

Suffer me here, my brethren, to urge upon you a serious self-examination. Do you possess this important principle, without which no real religion can subsist? What is your prevailing aim in life? By what

principle are you habitually influenced? Are you living to yourself or to God? Do you truly wish to honour him? Do you seriously consider what is the will of God, that you may do it? Do you accustom yourself to set him before you? Is the desire to serve and please Him the preponderating principle of your heart? Do all other motives give way to it? Do you feel it impossible to do with complacency any thing which you believe will be displeasing to God? If you have offended him, do you feel a real grief and uneasiness till you have confessed your sin to God, implored his pardon, and earnestly sought his grace to strengthen you for the future? If you do indeed possess such a principle, you possess that which contains in it the essence of all true religion and virtue. Cultivate it, and it will produce fruits of true righteousness to the glory of God. But how few are there in whom religion has any such prevailing ascendancy? The world at large may indeed pay some degree of attention to it, but it is still from an imperfect or selfish motive. They dread the judgment to come. They fear the Divine indignation, and would appease it by some religious acts, and by abstinence from gross vices: but their hearts are in the world, their religion is a matter of constraint, they are alive in the business of the world, they are cold and lifeless in the performance of religious duties. The influence of religion is occasional, transitory, imperfect, painful: the influence of selfish or worldly principles is constant, uniform, powerful, pleasing. How evident is it, that, till the state of the heart is rectified, there can be no obedience to God which will be acceptable to him, excellent in itself, or pleasant to the person who endeavours to perform it. As the heart is, so will the whole of the conduct be. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body will be full of darkness."

II. I proceed to consider, in several particulars, the extensive influence of the state of heart described by the expression, "If thine eye be single."

1. As it respects a *man's religious opinions*.—I do not assert, that if the state of a man's heart be right with God, his belief will be always right; but this I maintain, that the state of his heart will very much influence his faith: so that, if his heart be not upright with God, he will be greatly disposed to error; and, on the other hand, if the state of his heart be right, it will tend gradually to correct what was erroneous in his creed, and to give him just views of religious doctrines.

The influence of the heart on the understanding has frequently been the subject of remark. A man will soon understand a subject on which he is interested: he will know all its bearings and connexions, be master of the arguments advanced in its support, and think accurately and clearly concerning it, though still it may be that side of the subject only to which his heart inclines which he fully understands. There will be a bias on the mind to think in a certain way and direction concerning it; for we think chiefly of what is pleasing and interesting to us. In like manner, there is a certain strain of doctrines in religion which corresponds to a certain state of the mind; so that a man who is in that particular state will at length fall into that corresponding strain of doctrine, however much external causes may for a time retard the natural influence of his feelings. A man, for instance, whose heart and life are corrupt, will naturally embrace that system of doctrines which would tend to justify or palliate his own conduct. He will, therefore, be disposed to think lightly of the evil of sin, to mitigate the strictness of the Divine Commandments, to enlarge his conceptions of the mercy of God, and to lower his views of his justice. His belief in Revelation itself will be very apt to be shaken, and his interpretations of it will be generally very loose and vague. On the other hand, where a man is influenced by a sincere desire to please and serve God, he will naturally be drawn to embrace a more correct and scriptural system of doctrines; his

sincere regard to the just authority of God, and his upright endeavours to please him will naturally induce him to dwell upon the reasonableness and equity of his commands, the purity and perfections of his nature, the evil and ingratitude of sin against him. He will be disposed, therefore, to erect a high standard in religion. In proportion as any man is truly upright, and consequently striving to do much in the service of God, he will perceive the more clearly how far he falls short of perfect obedience to the Divine commands. He will therefore be disposed to believe the doctrine of man's corruption, and the necessity of an atonement for sin, and thankfully to receive the glad tidings of a Saviour. This will also incline him to believe in the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit. Thus also, where the heart is truly set upon serving God, it will dispose a man to read his word frequently and attentively, and to pay much attention to its declarations; and this will naturally direct his mind with the views and principles which the Bible contains. In every point of view, therefore, we see the natural tendency which a right state of the heart has to produce a right system of belief. So true are our Saviour's words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

I am, however, very far from asserting, that a man's system of faith is the test of his sincerity. A man may be very orthodox, and yet his heart be very corrupt before God; and, on the other hand, a man may be truly upright before God, and yet his present creed may be very different from that which has been almost universally held by the most sincere and pious Christians. Much must be allowed for the bias of education, the force of prejudice, the association of long accustomed ideas, the pride of reasoning, or the influence of friends. I assert only, that it is the tendency of a right state of the heart to produce a right faith; that in proportion as a man is truly living with the desire to serve God faithfully, he will by degrees embrace all the fundamental

doctrines of Scripture, and think rightly as well as act rightly. Slighter errors may still remain even to the last. Alas! who that knows the imperfection and the corruption of the human mind, can expect otherwise? But I cannot hesitate to assert, that there will, in no long time, be a coincidence among all real Christians in all the fundamental points of Christianity, and a tendency, even in lesser ones, to embrace more and more the true system of faith.

2. The state of the heart will greatly influence the state of the *affections*.—I mean, that if a man's real aim is to serve God, this will tend to bring all his affections and dispositions into a right state.

For let a man be truly desirous of pleasing God, the tendency of this desire will be first to lead him to a better acquaintance with the character and perfections of that Being whom he now honours as his Supreme Master. And where the heart is thus turned to the frequent contemplation of Him whose attributes are infinitely glorious, what must be the result but an increasing conviction that He alone ought to be feared, and loved, and trusted? The comparison will be frequently made of this blessed Being with the other objects upon which the affections are most usually placed. They will be found to be in their own nature vain and unsatisfactory, perpetually exciting and perpetually disappointing expectation, difficult to be possessed, and when possessed, failing and transitory in their enjoyment. Hence by degrees the affections will be weaned from worldly things, and fixed upon higher and better objects. Love to God will now begin to direct and sweeten every religious service. What was before done only from a sense of duty will now be performed with the full and free choice of the heart. A pleasure of the purest kind will attend the performance of these services: not perhaps a rapturous and extatic joy, but the calm and rational delight of performing duty, the holy tranquillity of a renewed mind. The love of God will extend to the love of all goodness; to the love of

truth, justice, benevolence, piety. Devotion, when performed with the heart, will become the source of the noblest enjoyment. Every thing is tedious in which the heart is not engaged; every thing delightful in which it is interested. All the duties of religion will wear a pleasing and cheerful aspect. It will be the service of Him to whom we owe every thing that is truly great and valuable. Our happiness will become more and more of a spiritual nature. We shall rejoice in the contemplation of God's providence, appointing and directing all things with never-failing wisdom and infinite goodness. We shall rejoice in the rich provision made in the Covenant of Grace for all the wants of sinful man. We shall rejoice in the delightful hope, that there is a land of blessedness above, which pain, and sorrow, and sin, shall never be permitted to invade. Our hopes will be directed, not to transitory things, but to those which are spiritual and eternal. The favour of God will be the first object of our wishes and hopes; and the possession of eternal glory will be the noble aim of our highest ambition. In a mind so constituted the affections cannot entertain low and unworthy aims. Where one object engrosses the heart, which is, in its own nature, transcendently great and glorious, it tends to inspire the soul with its own greatness and glory; it assimilates it in some measure to itself, and renders it incapable of what is sordid and grovelling. God and mammon cannot reign in the same heart: they are incompatible objects of esteem. The heart may be attached to the one or to the other; but it cannot love both at the same time, any more than there can be light and darkness in the same place at the same instant. God may be the object of thought, or even of desire, at some transient moment, although such thoughts or desires may have no influence upon the affections. But in the case we suppose where the heart is right with God: where, of course, his perfections are daily contemplated; where he is daily worshipped in sincerity and truth: where the heart is really bent upon pleasing Him

and fulfilling his holy will; there the influence of such a principle cannot but be widely extended: it cannot tolerate a state of indifference: it must be itself extinguished, or it will extinguish, like the splendour of the sun the lesser lights which before directed our dubious course. The Lord and Creator of the heart will assert his right, and the affections will bow to him as their Supreme Lord.

It is because the heart is not right with God that we see so frequently the affections wavering and unsteady in religion. There is no settled preponderancy of esteem of God and divine things. The understanding is enlightened, rather than the heart rectified: the mind is convinced, rather than converted. Hence the affections are sometimes directed to God, then again to the world. This unsteady principle renders every thing unsteady. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." His whole mind is a sea of fluctuations, of contraries, of uncertainty, of failure. It is like a ship at sea which has lost its rudder, and is carried on by the winds and the tide wherever they may chance to drift her. One steady principle must direct the whole man, if he would expect consistency and improvement.

3. The *general conduct* will be under a right influence wherever the heart is sincere towards God: that is, if a man's grand aim is to please and serve God, it will produce a course of moral conduct worthy of a religious profession.

If a man's heart is not right with God; that is, if he does not so truly aim to please God that every other principle gives way to this: his conduct however excellent in many points, will in some be greatly deficient. He cannot be depended upon in all things; he will still retain some besetting sin, which will continually overcome him; he will yield to temptation, when strong and pressing: he will not be uniform and consistent in his conduct: in secret he will often be a different person from what he is in public. There will be a lamentable unsteadiness in him which cannot be corrected till the

governing principle becomes more pure, and has a predominating influence over his mind. But, where the heart is right with God, there it is bent upon doing one thing only. Other things may indeed, for a time, occupy, and strongly occupy, the mind, but they will be still so far under the controul of the religious principle, that nothing sinful, nothing contrary to the will of God, can ever be admitted: in short, nothing will be done but with a reference to the authority and superintendence of God's holy will and commandments.

Hence the conduct will in general be pure and correct. Where there is a deviation from what is right, it will be an interruption. There will be a principle of correction within, which will gradually tend to discover what is amiss, to remonstrate against it, and to amend it. For the true principle which influences the heart possesses in itself an excellency and a power which tends to bring every thing right. It is an *universal* principle—A regard to God will operate equally with respect to every part of duty: it will as much require duty to man as duty to God: it will enforce practice as well as enjoin devotion; it will operate against lesser sins as well as against grosser offences. The same reasons which forbid the act forbid the principle also; the same authority which forbids us to commit evil requires us to do good: the same power which enjoins a moral conduct, equally enjoins a right state of the affections and desires. It is also a *steady* and *uniform* principle. The authority of God is, like himself, permanent and eternal: it allows no cessation of duty, sanctions no negligence of conduct, admits of no indulgence of some beloved sin. It is also a most *holy* principle: it tolerates not the least degree of iniquity; it points at the highest state of purity, as that to which we ought to aspire: it raises the standard, indeed, to a height to which no human power can attain, but it reconciles us to this perfection of holiness by providing a remedy for our defects. Thus operating with perpetual force, in a direction ever right, it will produce a greater

and greater degree of holiness in every part of the conduct of those who are truly influenced by it. Conscience, under its power, becomes gradually more tender: it will not suffer what is wrong: it will become an active guardian, watching over our best interests, regulating itself by the smile or the frown of the Most High, directing us to act continually in a manner more and more becoming the Holiness and Majesty of the God whom we serve.

4. And lastly, the right state of the heart will influence in a very remarkable degree, *the future progress, in religion.*

"The path of the just is like the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Where all is right in the heart, where the fear and love of God prevail over the fear and love of the world, where the principle of action is pure and holy—there the progress cannot but correspond to the excellence of the principle. In this case, there will be seen that most interesting of all earthly appearances, the progress of a corrupt creature towards perfection, the gradual transformation of a sinful mind into the Divine image; the preparation of a depraved creature for the inheritance of the saints in light. Where the heart is not right with God, there will be no such gradual transformation. Life will be spent in a succession of feeble efforts for improvement, and of relapses into sin; increasing years will be marked with no decisive or perceptible growth in holiness; temptation will not have lost its power; the world will still retain its influence; the heart will be still the slave of selfishness and sin. The importance of religion may be acknowledged and felt, but its power will be unknown.

But enough has been said as to the effects of a right state of the heart; enough, I trust, to convince you, my brethren, that unless the heart be thus right with God, it is absolutely impossible that there should be any real religion. But some one will perhaps say, "I am convinced of the truth of your observation; but, alas! I am

also convinced that my own heart is not thus right with God! Tell me what must I do to obtain such a state of heart as I see to be indispensably necessary to my salvation?"

In answer to this inquiry, I would observe, that you must begin in religion with laying down this as your fundamental maxim, that you are to make the will of God the supreme rule of your conduct. Cost what it may, this must be done. Religion consists in your becoming a servant of God. You are now acting as if you were independent, and are living to yourself. In this state, religion is impracticable. You must now begin to be religious, with renouncing your own will and determining, by God's help, that you will obey him fully and implicitly; that you will make every sacrifice which he demands; that you will perform every duty which he requires; that your temporal interest shall not weigh with you when it comes in competition with your obedience; that your pleasures shall be given up, if they interfere with your duty to God and the interest of your soul. Will you make this resolve? Will you give religion so pre-eminent and honourable a place? Will you thus enthrone God in your heart? Do this, and the work is done. But to do this, is indeed the difficulty. It is so: but, remember, if you are disposed to do it, that the help of the Almighty will not be denied. Go, and implore divine aid. Prostrate yourself before your God. Confess your weakness and corruption. Acknowledge his right to reign over you, and to be obeyed absolutely and unreservedly. Set before you the importance of salvation. Your all is at stake. Religion will be only the source of pain to you, if it is not the source of enjoyment. The miseries arising from indecision are great and constant. You must, you must be decided. Set before yourself the character of God as your Creator and Judge, who is infinitely wise, and holy, and just and good. Learn from this the reasonableness of all that he requires. Can He be unreasonable in his demands who has made you what

you are, and given you all that you possess? And, above all, set before yourself the wonderful work of your Redemption! See there what Christ the Son of God has done for you; and learn your obligations, not to live unto yourself, but unto him who died for you and rose again! Choose, therefore, whom you will serve; and beg of God to give you a new heart, and to renew a right spirit within you, that walking in the light, and serving God in sincerity and truth, you may at last be guided to light and glory everlasting!

SERMON XIII.

ON THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

Rom. v. 2.

We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

THE next thing to the enjoyment of heaven, is the well-founded and joyful expectation of it. This expectation, when sufficiently strong, will so gild the scenes of this fading and transitory world, as to give to it a resemblance of the glorious state of felicity above. And this expectation it is the manifest design of the Gospel to communicate to man. "Being justified by faith," saith the Apostle, "we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Whenever I set down to contemplate any subject connected with the Gospel of Christ, I never fail to be impressed with the very evident design which it every where displays to bless the children of men. I every where behold marks of compassion and bounty; such as could only proceed from Him whose goodness is, like his other attributes, infinite and incomprehensible. I perceive every where such an evident plan to bless, to exalt, and to ennoble fallen man.

that in the greatness and uniformity of the design I am compelled to trace and acknowledge a Divine Original. It every where supposes the present state of man to be poor and wretched, while it points out an adequate and entire remedy for all his evils, and opens to him such bright glimpses of everlasting glory as could only be derived from that blessed scene of universal love, where the boundless power of the Almighty is employed to perpetuate and diffuse consummate bliss. Behold, my brethren, the hope of your calling. Heaven is not merely held out to you as the doubtful and distant reward of long-continued service and undeviating obedience; it is offered freely as a gift, bespeaking the bounty of the illustrious Donor, and the honour of the Redeemer, on whose account and to whose glory it is given, freely given, to all who truly believe in Christ Jesus. And they are encouraged to rejoice in expectation of the prize of their high calling, and to receive the earnest of it in their souls.

God forbid that I should encourage any unfounded and delusive hopes of eternal happiness; yet, on the other hand, far be it from any minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to conceal or to obscure the infinite bounty of God. It is evidently his will that the sinful children of men, though unworthy of the least of his mercies, should upon their faithful reception of the Gospel of his beloved Son, be entitled not only to the enjoyment of heaven hereafter, but to the reviving hope and expectation of it here; that they should live in the constant view of it, enjoying in their souls the foretaste of it, and looking for and hastening unto the coming of Christ.

It is indeed to be lamented, that a very large proportion of nominal Christians do not enjoy this delightful anticipation. For though there are few who do not entertain a hope that they shall be saved at last, yet their hope is little more than the mere natural desire to be delivered from an alarming evil. It is a hope founded upon their wishes, rather than upon any declaration of the

word of God; it is a hope in contradiction to the general tenor of Scripture, rather than supported by it; it is a hope which affords no animating and delightful views, which awakens no interesting contemplations, which does not arm its possessor against the fear of death, or console him in the hour of affliction, which does not invigorate the spirit nor purify the soul.

It would be easy to assign several reasons why our minds are so faintly impressed with the glorious hope of immortality which the Gospel sets before us: but they may be reduced to these two: Men are either too little interested about religion to attend to it with sufficient seriousness, or they entertain some unhappy mistake respecting its nature.

The first of these causes is by far the most prevalent. Men are occupied by the business and cares of the world, and become indifferent to every higher object; or they are captivated by sensual pleasures, and are habitually gross and sensual. They have neither leisure nor inclination for what is spiritual and holy. Their conceptions of happiness are confined to the gratification of their corrupt appetites. All their hopes and expectations are riveted to earth. When they are told, that the joys of heaven are pure and spiritual, arising from religious views and feelings, from prayer and praise, and holy love to God, and ready obedience to him; they are conscious, though they may scruple to avow it, that these are exercises in which they can discover no delight, but which, on the contrary, are irksome and disgusting to them. Hence it is utterly impossible that they should anticipate with joy a mode of existence hereafter which appears insufferable to them here. Religion would destroy their enjoyments. It requires a state of mind with which their present pleasures are incompatible. The very nature, therefore, of heaven debars the greater part of mankind from deriving much joy from the contemplation of it. Were it a Mahometan paradise, it would be an object of much more general delight.

And even where there is felt some degree of interest about religion, an unhappy mistake respecting its true nature often prevents the enjoyment of the Christian hope of immortality. Such is the case wherever the glorious grace of the Gospel and the unsearchable riches of Christ are not fully understood. Religion may be imagined to be merely a system of restraints and punishments—a scheme of painful moral discipline. God may be viewed only in the light of a Judge; and the office and death of the Redeemer may be overlooked and neglected. In this case, no sure and certain hope of a blessed immortality will cheer the soul, or impart its reviving and invigorating influence. For Christ is the Sun of Righteousness, whose vivid beams quicken and illuminate the soul; dispel the mists of doubt, and impart at once the desires of heaven and the anticipation of it. Christ is the resurrection and the life. He is the hope of glory. In his light we see light. It is only the clear and stedfast view of the unspeakable mercy and grace of God, revealed in the Gospel of his Son; that mercy which, through his blood, cancels so freely innumerable offences; that grace which, for his sake, bestows on the most unworthy such infinite blessings, which can communicate peace and joy in believing. The Gospel must be considered in its proper light—as glad tidings of great joy—as the marvellous display of infinite mercy to man, ere it can impart to us a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

In opposition to that delusive and vain hope with which so many deceive themselves, let us now consider the nature of that joyful “hope of the glory of God” which the Scriptures represent as the delightful portion of true believers in Jesus Christ. I will first give a general view of it as derived from the sacred writings, and then exhibit more in detail the several parts of which it consists.

The true servants of God, then, are represented as placing a delightful and unshaken confidence in the security of his promises, and in the extent of his mercy.

"Because thou hast been my help," they say, "therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." "My flesh, and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "And now, Lord, what wait I for? Surely my hope is even in thee." "I have trusted in thy mercy: my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments. Uphold me according to thy word, and let me not be ashamed of my hope." "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."

Such were the expressions of confidence in God of the holy fathers of the church, ere yet the Sun of Righteousness had arisen upon the world. After his appearance, the objects of hope become more distinct and luminous, and the confidence in God more strong and abiding. The Lord of the church himself had encouraged in his disciples a joyful hope of immortality. "Fear not, little flock: it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

Agreeably to these declarations, the disciples of Christ are represented as "waiting for the adoption, for the redemption of the body;" as "groaning, being burdened in this tabernacle: not that they would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life;" as "waiting, through the Spirit, for the hope of righteousness by faith: looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God;" as "looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the

Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" as "waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who should also confirm them to the end in the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" as "building themselves up in their most holy faith, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;" as "filled by the God of hope with all joy and peace in believing, that they might abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Hence they triumphed with a holy confidence, rejoicing in the expectation of that glory ready to be revealed. "We know," said they, that if "our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: therefore we are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. For we know in whom we have believed, and that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him till that day." "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory! The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Such is the strain of holy triumph with which the disciples of Christ contemplated the prospects which opened to them in another life. Thus they stretched forward with desire, and hastened unto the coming of their Lord. Nor were these empty words. They cheerfully suffered the loss of all things, knowing that they had a more enduring inheritance. They willingly exposed themselves to pain and sufferings, rejoicing "that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake;" and they joyfully embraced death itself in the assured expectation of entering at once into eternal life.

If we examine more in detail the happy disposition which is described in my text, and in those other passages of Scripture which I have mentioned, we shall

and it to consist in a firm belief of the life to come—in delightful contemplation of its glory—and in confident expectation of its enjoyment.

1. In a *firm belief* of the life to come.—There is an assent to what the Scriptures have declared concerning the world to come which is attended with no deep impression on the heart. A man believes that this life is as a shadow that departeth; a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then is gone; a mere span and moment of time; and that there is another world, altogether glorious, in which the blessed persons who are permitted to enter will dwell for millions of ages;—and yet he is as anxious about this life, and as indifferent about that which is to come, as if he had believed the very reverse; as if this life were eternal, and that which is to come were a mere shadow. Shall we say that such a person has a true belief of the world to come? No: "faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." That is, true faith gives a subsistence in the mind to things hoped for: they remain there the objects of joy and hope; and it renders things invisible as if they were evident to our sight. Faith opens, as it were, to us the gates of the blessed regions above: it shews to us in a lively manner, the glory of the heavenly mansions; we contemplate the order, the harmony, the happiness of the blessed spirits of the just made perfect; the presence of the great Mediator; the favour of God; his wisdom, power, and goodness uniting to form an assemblage of all that will tend to make his creatures perfectly happy. The prospect which true faith gives, realizes heaven to our view; and in comparison of it, this earth appears very poor and mean: all its honours fade, all its pleasures wither, all its pomp disappears, all its sufferings seem to be but for a moment, and the soul is swallowed up in the contemplation of that eternal weight of glory which is set before us. Faith must thus give us a bright and clear view of the life to come: so that

it must be, in a manner, present with us ere we can really "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

2. This hope supposes *delightful contemplation*.—There is a cold, uninterested manner in which many think and speak of heaven; they feel no delightful glow of affection, no grateful emotions to him who formed it for man, no transporting impressions of its glory and felicity. They who can thus think or speak of heaven will not "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This supposes that it is made the subject of frequent and delightful meditation, that we rejoice in it, that we contemplate its glory. It is called by way of eminence "the glory of God;" as if the glory of God which shines through the whole universe, were there collected, as the light is in the sun. In heaven, the glory of God is fully displayed. His wisdom is there openly manifested and revealed, without a cloud to obscure it, or any defect in the view of the blessed inhabitants there assembled to behold it. There is the power of his glory seen in removing every evil, in creating every good, in enlarging the capacities of his creatures to enjoy perfect happiness, in uniting them and assimilating them with each other, that there shall be no possibility of jar or discord. There is the glory of his goodness displayed, pouring out mercies in rich profusion; mercies and blessings unknown before, and so numerous as to manifest the infinite bounty of his love. In a word, there all the attributes of the Deity meet together, in all the resplendent lustre of glory, and give a denomination to the place from the communication of the fullness of the Perfections of the Divine Presence. Now, the Christian hope of this glory implies, that the soul is often transported into these happy regions, and there walks with God—there imbibes somewhat of the spirit and temper of that blessed place, one glimpse of which can afford more real delight to the soul than all the pleasures put together which are to be found in this transitory life.

3. But, above all, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God, implies *confident expectation*.—What signify to me all the glories of heaven, unless I can entertain a well-founded hope that I shall enjoy them? To rejoice in them, therefore, supposes that I have a good hope, through grace, of being admitted into the kingdom of heaven. The clear view of the glory of heaven would only tend the more to depress the spirits of those who could not entertain a hope, that they should be admitted there. But it is the peculiar glory of the Gospel, that they who truly receive it may attain the “full assurance of hope,” that, through the infinite mercies of the Saviour, they shall be admitted to that glorious abode. They know in whom they have believed. They well understand his character, and entertain no doubt that he is equally able and willing to pardon their sins, and to admit them into his kingdom above.

I would hope, that this description of rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, has awakened in the breasts of some amongst you fervent desires and aspirations to become partakers of it. But, methinks, I hear some mournful heart reply, “Oh that I could possess this joyful hope! My breast has long been a stranger to such delightful sensations! I have met with little but sorrow and disappointment in this world, and I can now anticipate little else: but when I turn to the contemplation of another state, there all seems to be dark and uncertain. My fears exceed my hopes! Oh that I could indeed obtain such a hope! How gladly would my life then pass away! How light would all my present sufferings then appear!”

To such an inquirer I would first answer, that if he would obtain this hope, his heart must be wholly devoted to God. They who are divided between God and mammon, can never attain this joyful confidence. It is reserved for those who have a faithful and true heart. A worldly spirit is the great obstacle to peace in God. You must form your decision. You must choose for your portion God or the world. If the

world—then relinquish all expectation of happiness in God, in another state or in religion. These things will but poison your enjoyments. Your maxim must be, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” The world is a good master to those only whose hearts are entirely given to it. But if you revolt at this; if you say, Let my portion be in another world; then you must learn to place little dependence upon this—you must form no expectation of happiness from it—you must guard against worldly mindedness. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit.” If you wish to obtain the hope of glory, let this be made exclusively your aim. Give yourself up wholly to the Divine direction—pray earnestly to God. Study his word diligently, follow implicitly its directions. Hitherto, perhaps, other things have been the object of your pursuit; now the one thing needful must occupy your attention.

I would further exhort you to seek the holy hopes you desire, in God’s appointed way; that is, by faith in Christ Jesus.—“Being *justified by faith*,” saith the Apostle, “we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” Study, therefore, the Gospel, which is the grace of God in Christ. There you will see how wonderfully gracious and full of mercy our heavenly father is to all who believe in his Son. There you will read the precious promises which God has given to all who approach him in that name. There you will see Divine justice satisfied by the oblation of Christ, once offered on the cross, “as a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction for the sins of the whole world!” There you will learn that God can be glorified in the salvation of a sinner, through Christ; and that he delights to pour out his blessings on all who trust in the mediation of his Son. There you will see the full security of all who trust in him; the promise of God confirmed by an oath “that so by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we

might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us." I cannot better describe the Gospel than as a dispensation expressly intended for the comfort and peace of mankind, in which nothing is omitted to strengthen their hope, to encourage their confidence in God; and to assure them, that those who come to him he will in no wise cast out. You have the hope of consolation set before you in the office of the Holy Spirit, who, from the Divine consolations he affords to those who live under his blessed influence, is by our blessed Saviour expressly styled "the Comforter." "The Spirit," saith the Apostle, "witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. If so be that we suffer with him, that we may also live with him."

See, then, the care which our heavenly Father has taken to dispel all doubt and anxiety in the minds of his real disciples. Can any thing be more clear than his willingness to save you? Is there any reason for doubt or hesitation? "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God interceding for us."

Yet, while I describe this rich and full provision for peace and hope, which God has made in the dispensation of the Gospel, let it not be thought that the Holy Spirit will seal these blessings to the careless, the worldly, or the sinful professors of his religion. No! if you value the hope of glory, you will walk according to the vocation with which you are called. "He that hath this hope purifieth himself, even as he is pure." This the scriptural guard against a presumptuous abuse of this doctrine. If you do enjoy a hope of glory while your tempers are unsanctified, while you are living under the dominion of sin, know that your hope is presumption. "If our hearts condemn us not," says the Apostle, "we have confidence towards God." Indeed.

there will necessarily be a beautiful correspondence and harmony in every part of the conduct of those whose heart is right with God. The hope of heaven will be closely and inseparably connected with that purity of mind, and that love to God, which will preserve the soul from sin.

Thus may you attain this joyful hope of glory. And why, then, do we so incessantly listen to complaints of misery and sorrow? Is there no remedy? O ye afflicted, who are ready to cry, there is no hope for you! would to God you would cease to seek for happiness from the world, and endeavour to derive it from God! One faithful prayer will more calm the mind than the full indulgence of your fondest earthly hopes. Cease, then, to hew out broken cisterns, which can hold no water; and come to God, the Fountain of living waters. Hitherto you have sought for peace in the world: now begin to seek it in God only; seek a peace of a pure and spiritual kind, fit for an immortal spirit to receive, and for an infinite God to bestow!

Would to God, that every one who hears me would make this transporting hope of glory the object of his serious endeavours and his fervent prayers! How light would all our trials and sufferings then appear, when the prospect of eternal glory was ever dawning upon us! What an armour of defence would it be against every danger, if you could say, "All is well; for I now can confidently look up to God as my Father, and to heaven as my home! What a defence against the fear of poverty or pain, continually to rejoice in the prospect of a heavenly inheritance! It would be a treasure which would make us rich indeed. And how unspeakably valuable would it be in that solemn hour when we must quit this life, and all our expectations from it! My brethren, I speak to you as dying men. The hour cannot be very far distant, when you and I must lie on a death-bed: and what will then appear to be the value of a well-founded hope of glory? O! what transporting happiness will it be then to be

able to say, "I bless God, it is well with me: I have no fears of death: I enjoy a delightful hope of glory. I am willing to quit this corrupt and sinful world, that my happy spirit may join my Redeemer, and the glorious company of the ransomed above!" Which of you does not say, May this be my lot! "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

But, alas! I must also address many who enjoy no such hope of glory. The hour of death would come upon them with dreadful terror and fearful apprehensions. And O what a state! To be summoned to appear before God with a spirit oppressed by dreadful forebodings and bitter reflections; to have no cheering prospects of the glory ready to be revealed; to be a stranger to the precious promises of the Gospel; to die in darkness, without one ray of light from Heaven to enlighten the dreary passage! Alas! that any who have lived in a Christian land, any who have sat under the sound of the Gospel, and have been hearing continually of the salvation of Christ Jesus, should be found at last in this miserable state! My brethren, whose consciences testify that this would be your state if you were summoned to-night to meet your God, I beseech you by the mercies of God, by the redemption of Jesus Christ, by the regard you feel for your own salvation, think of these things. Pause for awhile, and ask whether you choose to die eternally. On the other hand reflect on the happiness of enjoying a hope full of immortality. Which will you choose? Heaven and hell are set before you. Go, decide which shall be your portion. God soon will send the messenger of death to know your determination. May you in that hour be able to say, Lord, I have waited for thy salvation!

SERMON XIV.

ON THE CHRISTIAN'S PEACE.

John xiv. 27.

Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

THESE words are a part of the last discourse which our blessed Saviour held with his disciples before his crucifixion. They are replete with that tenderness and kindness which were so conspicuous in his character. His apprehension of the bitter sufferings and ignominious death which he was himself about to undergo, seemed to be entirely lost in the consideration of that distress which his disciples would endure when they should behold their beloved Master so cruelly treated, and so unexpectedly taken from them. He therefore uses the most endearing expressions, and suggests the most affecting topics of consolation. He assures them, that he would not leave them comfortless, but would send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter from above, to supply his place, till he should come again and take them to himself, to dwell with him in those mansions of glory

which he was going to prepare for them. In the mean time, "Peace," he adds, "I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." This is my last and solemn bequest—peace—*my* peace—such as I have myself enjoyed, and as my Gospel is eminently calculated to produce;—peace with God as your reconciled Father—peace amongst each other as my brethren—and a blessed sunshine and serenity in your own bosoms, which no outward actions shall darken or disturb, because it shall be independent of sublunary things, and inspired immediately from Heaven. For "I give you peace not as the world giveth." It is not an unmeaning compliment—a mere parting salutation, or an unavailing wish for your welfare, valuable only as a token of my regard; neither is it that transient and delusive peace which worldly prosperity may sometimes afford. I leave you the substantial blessing—such as the world, with all its enjoyments, cannot give, nor, with all its vexations, take away. Therefore, "let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Be not disquieted at the prospect of my departure, nor dread any calamity which may threaten you when I am gone.

These promises were not given to the immediate followers of Christ alone, but to all, in every age, who should believe in his Name. At his departure from this world of sin and sorrow, he left this blessing to his first disciples, and, through their ministry to his whole church. "Peace by him," was to be preached in every nation; and all believers are interested in the bequest, and may claim its fullest benefit. Come, therefore, O ye disciples of Jesus Christ! and let us contemplate the nature of that legacy which our departing Master has left us. Let us survey this, our blessed inheritance; and, while we meditate on this peace, may the Holy Spirit shed it abroad abundantly in our hearts!

Perfect peace is a calm and tranquil state of mind, free from tumult and anxiety, alarmed by no dangers,

ruined by no passions, corroded by no cares, disturbed by no guilt, satisfied with its lot on earth, and reposing with cheerful confidence on the care of a Father, who is in heaven. Such was the frame of mind which our holy Master enjoyed—such is the disposition which he intends his faithful disciples to enjoy habitually.

Now, of such a peace, the great enemy is *guilt*. For how can peace be an inmate in the breast which is continually wounded by the goads of an accusing conscience? How can it dwell with trouble and perplexity, with shame and remorse, with painful recollections, and foreboding fears? Guilt corrodes the mind; stings it with the bitterest reflections; alarms it with the most dreadful apprehensions of punishment; represents God as an offended Deity, and a severe, inexorable Judge. In the ears of the wicked, it is said, there is a dreadful sound. “He knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand, and trouble and anguish make him afraid.” What peace, then, can the mind enjoy in such a state? How certainly and strongly does the awakened conscience reject every intimation of it! “What hast thou to do with peace?” is the taunting reply with which Conscience forbids the guilty soul to listen to the voice of consolation.

But Jesus removes our guilt. His Gospel sets before us a Fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, in which the most polluted may wash and be cleansed. It points to the atoning sacrifice—the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world—and declares the ability and the willingness of Christ to cancel our guilt, and to restore us to the Divine favour. From the contrite, therefore, and the broken in heart, who rely on this great Redeemer, the curse is removed; for their reconciliation with God is effected, the disturbing power of guilt is destroyed, and a sure foundation laid on which the superstructure of peace may rest.

Another certain obstacle to peace is *an impure and unholy disposition*.—Consider how extravagant, and often how inconsistent, are the objects which sin pro-

sents to the mind: how inordinate and lawless the desires which it excites: how unjust and violent the means by which it prompts us to seek the indulgence of them: and how many and turbulent passions are thus continually inflaming and agitating the bosom! Under such a controul, how easily is the soul inflated by success, irritated by disappointment, or stung by provocation! How frequently is it elevated by wild, unreasonable hopes, to be depressed as deeply when the expectation fails! What painful anxiety attends the pursuit, even where it is successful! What can be the peace of that mind which is swayed by ambition or avarice—which is full of envy, murder, deceit, malignity: proud, boastful, an inventor of evil things, implacable, unmerciful! These we know, and such as these, are the works and dispositions of the flesh; and they exist in one degree or other, and cause more or less disturbance in every carnal mind. Can peace, then, be the result of such a state? The nature of man, and the immutable laws of God forbid it. “There is no peace,” saith God, “to the wicked.” They are “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” But suppose that the sinful propensity is not of this strong and turbulent character; and that it is no more than a cold selfishness of heart, or a love of this present world, which, though neither ardent nor active, has yet excluded from the soul every other affection: can such a temper consist with peace? No: there is a vexation in the very vanity of all human wishes which are not regulated and directed by the word of God. And as in the body, there can be neither ease nor health unless its functions are duly performed, according to the laws of the animal economy; so the acts and motions of the soul can never promote its well-being and happiness, unless they all proceed agreeably to its original constitution. The affections must be placed on fit objects: the faculties employed for right ends; the various powers kept in due subordination to each other; and the tendency of all must

be to preserve that pure and holy character which God originally impressed upon the soul of our first parent, and which it is the office of the Holy Spirit to renew. As the heart deviates more from the word of God, it departs farther from a state of rest and ease. And though there are corrupt and unholy dispositions, which are comparatively passive and calm, yet they are too poor and sordid, too much beneath the dignity and destination of the soul, to afford it that serene and full satisfaction which can justly be called peace. For peace is of a pure and dignified character. The mind which is prepared for it has no bye ends to answer; nothing base, which it wishes to conceal; nothing dishonourable, which can tinge the cheek with shame. It endeavours to approve itself to God, pursues the objects which he proposes, refers its actions to him as their source and their end. Such a mind is desirous to act, and seeks only the praise which cometh from God: it is kind and generous, and desires the good of all mankind: it is pure, and always aspiring to what is excellent: it is humble, without ambitious or lofty views; and meek and unassuming, so that it suffers but little from disappointments. Pride which inflates, jealousy which corrodes, anger which enrages, grief which consumes, despair which destroys the mind, have no place in the Christian character: for they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." The religion of Christ is a dispensation of holiness, and the grand instrument to promote it. It is the preparation of the soul for the enjoyment of a state of peace here which is similar in its origin, nature, and means, to that eternal peace which shall be enjoyed above.

Anxiety about the future forms another obstacle to the enjoyment of true peace.—How many are there who cannot enjoy the present, because their minds are filled with painful apprehensions of what is to come. The want of sufficient provision for a family, the fear of some approaching loss or pain, the dread of some threatened danger, the recurring care about some ex-

pected event, will often haunt the mind, and render it a prey to the severest disquiet: ' But the Gospel of Christ is calculated to remove such cares, and to induce tranquillity and calm: for it cuts off the sources of anxiety by diminishing the supposed importance of those objects which otherwise exercise an undue influence on the mind—which fill it with groundless fears, or elate it with unreasonable hopes. The Gospel lessens the value of all human things, and substitutes for them objects of a higher and a nobler class;—the favour of the blessed God, the salvation of the immortal soul, an interest in the death and intercession of our Saviour, the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father, the hope which is full of immortality. These appear, to him who is properly trained in the school of Christ, objects of inestimable value, so that, in comparison of them, all anxieties of a worldly kind are of little moment. And further, our blessed Lord has taught his disciples to repose upon the parental care, the tender love which their Father, who is in heaven, has manifested for them. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns: yet your heavenly Father feedeth them: are ye not much better than they? Wherefore, take no" anxious "thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? for after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things: but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Thus faith teaches us to place a perpetual reliance on the care of our heavenly Father: it soothes the anxious mind, and disperses unreasonable fears. "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee."

The three grand sources of inquietude, *guilt*, and *unholy dispositions*, and *care*, being thus removed, there remains no obstacle to the enjoyment of peace; a peace

pure and holy, a peace solid and stable, the peace of God which passeth all understanding; all the joyful prospects, the cheering hopes of the Gospel, all the love of a Saviour, and the various blessings of his salvation, may then be received into the mind, and fill it with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. I do not, however, affirm, that this blessed peace will be necessarily and universally enjoyed by the faithful disciples of Christ; for, alas! their faith is often imperfect, weak, and unstable; their knowledge, low and confused; their religion languid, and their sanctification incomplete. Bodily indisposition will sometimes enfeeble the mind, and render it the prey of groundless apprehensions: we speak, therefore, only of the proper and direct tendency of the Christian system; of the manifest intention and design of its great Founder. And we say, that wherever its principles have full scope; wherever the heart embraces it without reserve; wherever its precepts are cheerfully received and followed; wherever prayer is constantly and devoutly addressed to God, and the holy Scriptures valued as the sources of consolation and the guides of life, there a holy tranquillity and peace of mind will be obtained, and the invaluable bequest of our Saviour really enjoyed—"My peace," says he, "I give unto you!" Every doctrine of the Gospel is intended to make way for this peace: every promise points to this design: every action of our honoured Redeemer, every gracious word which he uttered, every sacrifice of love which he performed, all refer manifestly to this object, and have a strong and direct tendency to promote it.

Let them tell, for they only are the just and legitimate witnesses, who have passed from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God:—let them describe the folly and vanity, the low ends, the vain expectations, the turbulent desires and corrupt motives, which once occupied their minds: let them say how impossible it was for them, in that state, to enjoy true serenity and solid peace. But hear them

also describe how, when the Day-star of righteousness arose and the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, they felt a pure and holy calm substituted for the turbulence by which they were before agitated.

The peace which Christ gives to his disciples is compared in the text with that which the world gives: "My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." The peace of the world is the peace which arises from mere sublunary sources, the satisfaction which men feel when their worldly schemes succeed; when their corn, and wine, and oil increase. Now such a peace is low in its origin; it is fallacious in its appearance; it is uncertain in its attainment; it depends on the caprice of others, on circumstances and events which we cannot controul; it disappoints us in the possession, and is transitory in its enjoyment. The world is like a hard master, giving with a niggardly hand, and conferring scanty and partial rewards; often withheld where most merited, and bestowed where there is least claim to them: it deceives us where we most trusted, and fails us where we most wanted it.—Not so the master whom Christians serve. Does he promise peace to his servants? He confers it liberally—he bestows it freely; he expects no return of obligation: he grants it universally to all his disciples: he disappoints none that truly seek it. His peace is a treasure invaluable to those who possess it. Enjoyment produces no satiety; length of possession does not cloy the mind: and as he gives not as the world giveth, so neither can the world deprive us of that peace which he bestows. While the faith is strong, and the heart pure, worldly troubles assail us in vain. The Christian remains unshaken amidst the storms and tempests which wreck the peace of others, and dash all their high hopes to the ground. Christian peace, and the peace of this world, differ as the characters of the different Masters who confer it. Christ has all power; is full of mercy; abounds in compassion, in goodness and love. Christ was pure and holy in all his conduct, influenced only by the most exalted views

—the glory of God and the good of man. His service cannot be hard; his rewards cannot be worthless; his peace cannot be empty. It will partake of the character of Him who bestows it: Divine in its origin, pure in its nature, powerful in its effects, glorious in its possession, durable in its continuance. It will be indeed the earnest of that peace which the same Lord bestows upon the blessed inhabitants of his kingdom.

But can it then be necessary to take pains in commending to you that peace which the Son of God bestows? Is it not superfluous thus to institute a comparison between Christian peace and the peace of this world? Alas! my brethren, I know too well the fatal charm which the world exercises over us; I know but too well how it ensnares the mind, captivates the affections, blinds the understanding, and enchains the reason. Things present, and things visible, have in our present fallen state, an unreasonable and most injurious influence. Hence the salvation and the peace of Christ, the hope of glory, the happiness of heaven, have little of their due weight and effect. The business of the preacher, the employment of the Sabbath, is intended to counteract this influence of earthly things, and to give to the joys set before us their due and just preponderance. In pursuance of this design, it is my duty to warn you, my beloved friends, not to seek for a peace which you cannot obtain: that you do not, in the emphatic language of Scripture, spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not: that you do not hew out to yourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water, and forsake the living fountain of which you may drink and live for ever.

If the two pursuits were compatible with each other: if you could at the same time serve mammon, and serve God; if you could obey the world as your master, and seek the peace which it offers, whilst you neglected not the peace which Christ communicates: then these cautions would be useless. But this, I fear, is the com-

mon and fatal error of mankind. They think the service of the world compatible with the service of God. They would divide their allegiance. They would combine and incorporate the two services which are absolutely inconsistent with each other.

The question is not whether, with the peace of God in the heart, we may not reasonably and moderately enjoy that portion of worldly things which God in his bounty has given to us. On that subject there is no room for reasonable doubt. We ought, with thanksgiving to the bountiful Author of our blessings, to accept and use the temporal enjoyments he has afforded us: but the question is, whether we may set our hearts on the world; whether we may labour chiefly for the meat which perisheth; whether we may devote ourselves to the service of the world. And what saith the Scripture? "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Our hearts must be where our treasure is—in heaven: Jesus Christ must be that Master whose commands we faithfully obey, and whom we are chiefly intent to please. Our chief desire must be to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; our most anxious endeavours to be holy, as he is holy. All earthly distinctions and pursuits must possess but a secondary place in our hearts: for till we attain this state we shall want the due disposition of a servant of the Most High—we shall not pay him the allegiance which is his due. The world is the enemy of God, the rival of his authority, the usurper of his throne: and allegiance to an usurper and to the lawful prince cannot consist together. Our ruling principle is corrupt, till we love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength; and till the love of father, mother, brethren, of all earthly relations, and even of life itself, are brought to yield to the love of Christ. And the reason of this is not because Christ is a hard or arbitrary Master, but because God can never be valued as he ought while any other being is held in greater or in equal regard.

Hence it is that inordinate worldly cares and worldly anxieties are incompatible with the peace which Christ giveth. They shew that the mind is not fully and firmly set upon "the things that are excellent;" upon the favour of God, and the attainment of Heaven.

Permit me, my brethren, to warn you, with all the earnestness of one who has felt your danger, and all the affection of one who feels tenderly for your welfare, that you seek not peace and happiness from worldly things. Consider the anxious mind, the wasting desire, the unceasing labour to obtain the things of this world, as equally foolish and sinful. Repress all such desires; hold them unlawful; be watchful against their entrance; regard them as your enemies. Behold, a far nobler object is held out to you by your God. You are heirs to higher hopes—to a glorious inheritance; render not yourselves unworthy of it by a mind too grovelling and sordid for its enjoyment. Reject not the manna of angels, to feed on husks, the food of swine. Quit not the society of the blessed, to mix in the riot of fools. Let not the word of God declare to you in vain, that "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness of it as the flower of the field." Let not the minister of Christ in vain urge you to "love not the world, nor the things of the world;" since "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Let not universal experience tell you, without effect, that all below is vanity, and vexation of spirit. Be persuaded; the combined voice of God, of reason and of experience, deserves attention and obedience. What farther evidence would you wish! Your own conscience confirms this concurrent testimony. Be wise, then, and seek for that peace which is too rich a blessing to proceed from any but a Divine hand; too valuable to be given to any but those who will honour it aright.

Should any one who has hitherto been seeking from the world a peace which he cannot find there, be induced, from what has been said, to inquire with real earn-

estness how he must obtain the peculiar peace of a Christian. I would reply: He must labour to detach his heart, and wean his affections from the world, which is the grand rival of Christ. He must impress strongly upon his mind the vanity of the world, the folly of its cares, the emptiness of its enjoyments, and guard against indulging a desire for worldly things as his portion. I would further exhort him to pray that his eyes may be opened to see his true state. Let him implore God so to enlighten and strengthen him, that the salvation of his immortal soul may become the great object of his life; and that his affections hitherto misplaced, may be set upon those noble and substantial objects, which will endure when this world and all its concerns shall have long ceased to exist. We must not expect that such a total change of mind, such a moral revolution, will take place at once; but it ought at once to become, as Scripture and reason sufficiently demonstrate, our grand object to attain it. This must be the chief end of our endeavours—the important business of our lives.

And, further, our applications to the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, who alone can give light to the understanding, purity to the heart, soundness to the judgment, a right direction to the affections, and peace to the conscience, must be earnest and constant. Christ must become our Saviour, to whom we trust for life and happiness; our Master whom we are to serve continually. Bought by his blood, we are to surrender ourselves to him; and believing in him, we are humbly to expect salvation from his free and unmerited grace.

In this renewed state, it will become us to guard against every thing which would draw off our attention and our affections from Christ. We must cherish a godly jealousy and fear, lest through the subtlety of Satan, the allurements of the world, or the corruption of nature, our hearts be drawn aside from God. Per-

severing thus in the faith of Christ and in obedience to him, he will enable us to find rest unto our souls: He will teach us the insufficiency of all earthly things, and his own power and willingness to bestow it. Thus we shall enjoy communion with him, and experience a blessed reality in religion, and possess that peace "which the world can neither give nor take away."

SERMON XV.

ON THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

Col. i. 28.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

THE office of a minister of Christ is highly important, and the relation between him and his flock is of the most intimate kind. It is his office to watch over their souls as one that must give account, and deliver to them the word of God, by which they are to become partakers of eternal life. It is his duty to exhort, to reprove, to warn, to teach, with all patience and long-suffering. Whether, then, we consider the end of his labours or the subject of his discourses, we shall see them to be of the utmost importance, and such as to justify that earnestness and authority in the manner of his preaching, which, were not the nature of his office considered, might appear extravagant and assuming.

In my text the Apostle refers to these three points:—

I. *The end* of a minister's preaching—"To present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

II. *The subject* of his preaching, by which this end is to be accomplished—"Whom we preach." And,

III. *The manner* of his preaching—"Warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom."

On each of these points I shall make a few observations, praying that the Holy Spirit, from whose influence only our preaching can derive any real efficacy, would be pleased to render what may be said effectual in producing the great design of that Gospel which is intrusted to us.

I. *The end of a minister's preaching is to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*

The mission of Christ upon earth, as a Saviour, supposes man to be a fallen and ruined creature: it implies that he is in a corrupt state, a servant of sin; and therefore in need of a Redeemer from its guilt and power. It supposes further, that those who are made partakers of the salvation of Christ are regenerate; have become new creatures in him, and lead a new life. But as this great change is not accomplished in an instantaneous manner, but, like the ordinary operations of the Divine power, gradually and by the use of means; so there are different stages of advancement, according to which a Christian may be said to be in an imperfect or a more perfect state. Thus the Apostle, explaining Christian perfection in his Epistle to the Ephesians, compares it to the state of a man who has attained his full maturity of strength. God has given to the several members of his church various gifts, all of which contribute, in their appointed way, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till they all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." From this statement,

St. Paul derives the exhortation to his converts, that "thenceforth they be no more children: but that, speaking the truth in love, they should grow up into him in all things which is the Head, even Christ."

We see, then, that the term *perfection*, as used by the Apostle, does not mean a freedom from all sin, but only a higher degree of knowledge, faith, and grace. It is opposed to the imperfect and weak state of man, when he first receives the Gospel.

Now, though, in this world, a Christian cannot, in the literal meaning of the word, become perfect; that is, complete in knowledge, faith, love, and holiness, any more than a man's bodily strength or his natural wisdom can become infinite: yet there is a degree of maturity and advancement which all real Christians enjoy, fully justifying the sense in which the Apostle has used the word: and it is the office of a minister of the Gospel, by instructing, warning, and exhorting his people, to present them thus perfect in Christ Jesus. This perfection, then, may be considered as opposed to a *partial*, an *unstable*, or a *defective* obedience to Christ.

He who is not yet arrived at a degree of maturity and establishment in Christ, is often *partial* in his obedience. He selects some duties which it is most easy for him to perform, while he omits others which are more difficult and require greater self-denial. He may be kind and compassionate to his fellow-creatures: but he is disposed to a compliance with the sinful habits of the world, and has not risen above the fear of man. He may be strict and just in his dealings: but he is slothful and careless in the improvement of his time. He may be punctual in attending the ordinances of grace, but not sufficiently watchful over his conduct in the management of his family. He may possess in some respects the image of Christ, and yet not the whole image. As the character I am describing is not that of a hypocrite, but of a weak Christian, I do not suppose that he willfully omits any known

duty, or that he does not wish and endeavour to acquire every Christian grace in which he perceives himself to be deficient. Yet there are certainly many graces which he possesses only in a very limited degree.

In like manner, there is an *instability* in his Christian course. He is not influenced by such a steadfast and constant principle, as to make him uniformly watchful and zealous. Sometimes he appears penetrated with a deep concern for his soul, and an ardent desire to glorify the name of Christ; but soon you find him cold, inattentive, and thoughtless. Now he is much impressed under the word of God; but afterwards you perceive that his actions do not satisfy the hopes which that impression had excited.

Add to this, that the man who is not yet perfect or established in Christ, is more or less *defective* in every act of obedience. There is no grace which he carries to its proper height; there is no principle which produces a full and complete effect upon his mind. He loves God, but not with that fervour which the Bible enjoins: he is humble in a measure, but is not properly affected by his unworthiness. He is not destitute of love to his neighbour; but that love is so weak that it produces no active exertions of benevolence. He worships God; but his gratitude is faint, his thanksgivings deficient in fervour: there is little real contrition in his confessions of sin, and he prays for an increase of grace without any intense desire for a higher degree of holiness.

But the Christian who is advanced to the stature of a perfect man, is established in knowledge, in faith, in love, and obedience. His attention having long been engaged in considering the great truths of Scripture, and having often tried by that unerring standard his own heart, and the maxims and habits of the world, he is not moved with every wind of doctrine: his mind is not harassed by tormenting doubts and suspicions respecting the truths of the Gospel. He sees the evil of error; he understands the truth in its relations, con-

nexions, and dependencies: his knowledge of the Gospel is extensive, clear, and copious. He knows that he has not followed cunningly devised fables, and is ready to give an answer to every man concerning the hope that is in him. And as he is established in the knowledge of the truth, so also is he in *faith in Christ*. His dependence upon him is constant, sincere, and uniform. He places no confidence in the flesh: he attributes nothing to his own power: he has no trust in his own righteousness. Dependence upon the Divine power, grace, and faithfulness, is habitual to him; and is the principle upon which he is daily acting.—Observe also, his *affections* and his hope are stedfast and lively: his love is pure, regular, and increasing; his dread of sin strong and habitual; his desires uniformly directed to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and of the grace of God in his soul. You do not find him temporizing and worldly in his spirit: his heart is whole with God. His patience under suffering is constant; his resignation to the will of God complete: he is ready to lay down his life whenever God calls for it, without murmuring or repining.—His *conduct* is also such as becomes these affections. It is exemplary and pure: you remark in him not merely strict integrity and a sober demeanour, but such a purity, watchfulness, charity, and good will, that the world around see his good works, and glorify his Father which is in heaven.—Such is the design of the preaching of the Gospel! It is to present men truly holy in the great day of the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is first to cleanse them from all the guilt of sin, by the efficacy of his blood, and then to sanctify them by the influence of his Spirit blessing the word, that they may become a holy and peculiar people, zealous of good works, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Thus Christ is said to have given himself for the church, ‘that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a

glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing: but that it should be holy, and without blemish."

Although this great end is never fully answered in this life, yet there is a gradual approach and tendency towards it. He who was once corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts of the flesh, without God and without Christ, now is become a new creature in Christ Jesus, and is growing in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. He is making a constant progress in real religion: he is continually using the means of grace, and is thus daily mortifying the body of sin, and attaining a greater conformity to the image of Christ.

II. But, secondly, Jesus Christ is *the subject* of the preaching of his ministers: and, by preaching Him, the great end which has been considered is to be accomplished.

To preach Christ, is to preach the Gospel of Christ. This Gospel was intrusted to the Apostles and after them to successive ministers, as the word by which the Kingdom of Christ was to be established, and man to be restored to the image of God. The Gospel of Christ comprehends the whole of his doctrine. It may be considered as consisting of two parts: the one relating to the efficacy of his death, and the benefits which all true Christians derive from it: the other enforcing and explaining the nature of that holiness which is required of all who are made partakers of his great salvation. It is not an uncommon error to confine the preaching of Christ, wholly to the first of these two great divisions of Christian truth: whereas, the second is here expressly stated as a branch of the Apostle's office: he was to warn and to teach every man, in all wisdom.—But as that subject more properly belongs to the last of the three topics I propose to consider, I shall here only shew, that proclaiming the death of Christ is eminently calculated to produce the great effect which I have described. This will appear, if we consider the *obligations* which it inculcates, and the *principles* which it supplies.

1. The *obligations* which it inculcates are of the highest nature.—It teaches us to regard ourselves as redeemed by the most precious blood of the Son of God, from a state of endless ruin and misery. A state more awful cannot be conceived. We were under the wrath of God, destitute of power to retrieve ourselves, the slaves of sin, and under the dominion of Satan: led captive by him at his pleasure, we were pressing rapidly forward to eternal perdition, and were utterly unable to arrest or suspend our progress. In this state our eyes were opened to our misery and ruin, and we trembled under the sense of our danger. But the Gospel tells us of redemption in Christ: it exhibits him with a love and pity which can know no parallel, coming down into the world to make atonement for sinners: it reveals him as able and willing to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him: it shows the sinner the efficacy of his Redeemer's death: his meritorious intercession: his care over his church: the promises he gives to his people: his watchfulness and protection of them; his boundless love and wonderful grace. And, while the Gospel reveals these glorious truths, does it not disclose, in the fullest manner, our obligation to live to Christ, to consider ourselves as no longer our own, but bought with a price, and bound therefore to glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are his?

2. The preaching of Christ having thus exhibited to man the obligations under which he lies to his Redeemer, proceeds to inculcate and confirm the most powerful principles of action which can affect the human heart. It addresses a man's most serious fears, his warmest hopes, his liveliest gratitude and love. It represents in so vivid a light the misery of separation from Christ—the dreadful state of those who are excluded from the kingdom of heaven—the danger of yielding to the world and the devil, and, above all, to that corrupt flesh which is the enemy of God and of godliness—that the Christian's chief apprehension is lest he should be rejected by his Saviour. Therefore

he watches, he prays, he reads the word of God, he seeks in all things to approve himself as the servant of Christ. But his hopes are awakened not less than his fears, and are directed to the same great end. The hope of dwelling with Christ and beholding the felicity of his chosen people; the hope of entering into rest from all the troubles of this evil world; the hope of being endued with grace to glorify God, and to honour his name on earth, inspire him with earnestness in running the race set before him, and with a holy resolution to overcome every difficulty and opposition. To these principles he adds the still stronger motives of gratitude and love. He feels that he owes to his Redeemer all his happiness, present as well as future. He sees that Christ can call him to no self-denial which he is not bound by the most sacred obligations of gratitude to evince, and that the greatest sacrifices he can make are incomparably inferior to that which his Saviour has made for him. He is stimulated to more earnest exertions while he sees in this evil world how few honour and love the name of his Divine Master. He feels with the Apostle that all things are but dross and dung compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. Like him, he says, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Jesus Christ." Thus is he prepared to devote himself wholly to the service of God. He feels that he is bound no longer to live to himself, but to pass a holy and useful life, devoted to the service of him who gave himself for him.

Such obligations, and such principles, the preaching of Christ is intended to inculcate; and it is therefore obvious that the constant instruction of the minister, and constant attention of the hearer, will be necessary to give a right direction and guidance to principles so powerful.

III. Thirdly, then, In what *manner* is this instruction to be given? The text sets before us the practice of the great Apostle—"warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom."

Three things are here observable: That Christians are to be warned;—that they are to be instructed in every kind of spiritual wisdom;—and that this warning and this instruction are to be addressed to all—“teaching *every man*, and warning *every man*.”

Christians are to be *warned*.—Whatever some may conceive of the privileges of Christians, who, they suppose, are to hear only of the promises, mercy, and love of Christ, a real Christian will feel that he needs constant admonition and caution. He will feel the danger of relapsing into a careless and worldly spirit. The preaching which flatters, is not the preaching which is suited to him. He wants a close and faithful address to the conscience. He feels it often necessary to examine himself; and the warnings which Christ gave to the churches of Asia he cannot think unnecessary or inapplicable to his own soul. Corrupt habits insensibly creep upon us; a careless frame of mind is easily indulged, and were it not for the affectionate admonitions of the word of God, and of his ministers, we should soon sink into the state of the Laodicean church, “having a name to live, while we are dead.”

In the same manner we need *instruction*.—The truths of the Gospel are indeed few and simple; and were our dispositions habitually devout and serious, we might soon acquire a competent knowledge of the truth. But we are by nature slow of heart to learn the things of God. So much of our time and attention is devoted to the world, and so reluctant are we to meditate on spiritual subjects, that we make but a slow proficiency in the school of Christ. Neither is it sufficient that we know the simple truths of the Gospel: we must consider them in their connexion and relation to each other; we must correct and enlarge our views of spiritual truth. On examination, we shall probably discover some mixture of error in our most settled opinions. New cases occur, new difficulties and dangers arise, requiring fresh wisdom and experience in the Gospel. Add to this, that the knowledge which the

Gospel inculcates is to be practical and influential on our conduct; and, whatever we may know in theory of the truth, we shall find, when we consider the influence it possesses over us, that we still need much instruction. The branches of Christian knowledge are very extensive. Wisdom is required towards them that are without: wisdom to discharge all the duties of christianity: wisdom to escape the snares laid for us: wisdom to confirm the faith of those under our care: wisdom to avoid giving offence: wisdom to imitate the conduct of Christ, our Lord, in all things fully and completely.

The Apostle notices also, that *every man* has need of this warning and this instruction.—The Apostles themselves were not exempt from this necessity. Our Lord had occasion both to instruct and to warn them, even to the last day of his residence among them. Let no man, therefore, think he stands in no need of instruction. “If any man,” says the Apostle, “think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” There are, indeed, many whom ministers address from the pulpit, at whose feet they would gladly sit and receive instruction. But it is the word of God which they are commissioned to teach: they declare only what the oracles of Divine Truth confirm: and they consider themselves, therefore, as only the instruments to make known the power and wisdom of God, as it is revealed in the Gospel.

Thus, then, the man of God is perfected for every good work. By the preaching of the Gospel new light is continually afforded him—new and purer views are communicated to him—holier principles are implanted in his breast—the wrong motives by which he had been influenced, the depraved habits which he had indulged, are corrected—till at length he is presented perfect in Christ Jesus.

Two reflections seem naturally suggested by the subject we have considered.

First—If the office of the ministry is so important, is it not your duty to pray earnestly to God, that your ministers be endued with wisdom and grace, and that you may receive their admonitions with candour and affection? We feel, my brethren, the importance and difficulty of our station: we trust to your prayers for us. The pastoral relation ought to be closer than it is in general. There should be a mutual spirit of prayer for each other to the Supreme Head of the Church. It is a great design in which we are engaged—to present you perfect in Christ Jesus at the great day of his appearing.

And secondly, considering the magnitude of the work to which both ministers and people are called, let us never engage in it but with the solemnity which it requires. It will soon be found to have been unspeakably important. That day is at hand, when wealth, and power, and beauty, and wit, will be shewn to be vain and useless; and, amidst the wreck of all which the world esteems, the knowledge and love of Christ, and obedience to his commandments, will appear to be the only real and permanent good of man.

Let this great object, then, be frequently set before us. Let us often think of the design of Christ in coming into the world, of the strict inquiry which will be made at the last day into our principles and conduct, of the means which Christ has appointed and is daily employing to present us perfect at the great day, and let us anxiously examine ourselves, whether those means have been successful—whether we have attended to the instructions we have received—whether, in short, we are still worldly-minded, careless, and corrupt, living without God in the world, and without any true and practical knowledge of Jesus Christ;—or whether, being ingrafted into him by a living faith, we are walking according to his will, receiving his precepts and instructions, treasuring them up in our hearts, and conforming our lives to them; so that we may be

presented perfect in Christ Jesus at the great day of his appearing. Happy are they who will then be found so living! May this be the happy state of all my hearers! Or, to express in the Apostle's words my desires for them—"May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the good Shepherd of his sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON XVI.

ON SPIRITUAL MINDEDNESS.

Coloss. iii. 1—3.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

THE spiritual nature of the Christian Religion forms a very strong presumption in favour of its Divine original. The principles it inculcates are not those of this world: the consolation and peace it affords do not arise from worldly sources; the hopes it sets before us, and the rewards it promises, refer to a future state. The desire of applause, the sense of honour, ambition, and the hope of temporal advancement—motives which are naturally very powerful, and which form the chief springs of action in other systems of religion—are rejected as unworthy of the Christian purity. Our Lord thus described the character of his religion; “My kingdom is not of this world.” Its maxims and views are not such as naturally occur to the world: nor are they

suited to those whose attention is engrossed by worldly affairs.

We therefore frequently find, in the writings of the Apostles, cautions respecting our use of this world: they continually impress on their disciples a fear and jealousy of its influence. Their converts were often reminded that the eager pursuit of earthly things, and the spirit and temper of the world, were inconsistent with that frame of mind which is essential to the Christian character. They were commanded "not to love the world, nor the things of the world." They were taught to rank the world among the principal enemies of Christ, with the flesh and the devil. St. Paul, when speaking of those hypocrites whose unholy conduct he could not mention without tears, who were the "enemies of the Cross of Christ," whose "God was their belly," whose "glory was in their shame," thus concludes the description: "they mind earthly things; for," adds the Apostle, "our conversation is in heaven." This abstractedness from the world and from worldly maxims, which the Gospel has required, has necessarily given great offence to those whose cares and pursuits are wholly of a temporal kind. They have accordingly represented heavenly mindedness as incompatible with the present state of man, as inconsistent with that degree of attention to earthly affairs which is indispensable for conducting the business of life; as incapacitating those who are under its influence for an active and energetic discharge of the duties of their station; and as encouraging an inactive and speculative devotion, neither honourable to God nor agreeable to right reason.

To ascertain what foundation there is for this charge, let us *first* inquire what are the dispositions forbidden by the Christian religion, and what is the temper required of a Christian: "Set your affection," says the Apostle, "on things above, not on things on the earth:" and, *secondly*, let us consider whether this temper is

consistent with a due attention to the business of the world.

1. Set not your affection on things on the earth.

We cannot suppose that the Apostle intended, by this precept, to prohibit every degree of attention to secular affairs. It was the universal law of the Creator, that "by the sweat of his brow man should eat bread;" and God has expressly allowed to us six out of every seven days for this purpose, thus permitting these pursuits by his word, and rendering them necessary by his providence in the very constitution of the world. And the Gospel, so far from introducing a new law to dispense with these occupations, has declared the neglect of them criminal. Idleness is a sin ever followed by its natural punishment; and this punishment the Gospel confirms: "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." Jesus Christ himself laboured with his own hands. The Apostles, though set apart to be preachers of the Gospel, set an example of secular industry to the flock whom they instructed. Further, the precepts cannot be meant to prohibit a degree of earnestness and attention while we are engaged in our necessary business. To insure success in our lawful callings, a considerable measure of care and forethought is absolutely necessary. Consequences must be anticipated, circumstances weighed, plans deliberately framed, inconveniences guarded against, and opportunities watched: to neglect such precautions is to discard the use of that prudence and wisdom which God has given us. Strenuous exertions are also frequently essential in worldly affairs, and especially in extraordinary or difficult conjunctures; and without a certain degree of activity, and energy, even the ordinary business of life cannot be conducted with effect. The voice of nature and the language of Scripture do not contradict each other. The course of nature has rendered labour indispensable, and the commands of Scripture require us not to be slothful in business. I will go further, and say, that not only is an indolent inattention to our proper avoca-

tions not warranted in Scripture, but is productive of the worst consequences to the soul: it is the very nurse of sin, and the inlet to temptation. I will add yet more: an assiduous and uniform care to discharge with fidelity and diligence the various duties of our station is even a necessary qualification for that heavenly mindedness which the text requires.

Neither are we to conceive that our deadness to the world, and to the things of it, implies an indifference to all the pleasures of life—to such gratifications as arise from the enjoyment of the works of creation, from the intercourse of friendship, from the indulgence of the social feelings in our domestic relations. In these and similar cases, heavenly mindedness will promote that very disposition. This is most favourable to the production of legitimate pleasure: and in this, as in the former instance, the language of nature and of Scripture are in perfect harmony. What then does the precept of the text forbid? It forbids us *to set our affections* upon the things on the earth. We are not to make these our chief pursuit: to seek them with our utmost eagerness; to be inordinately elated when we are successful in obtaining them, and exceedingly depressed when we lose them. Our happiness must not consist in these things. Though earthly blessings may be lawfully enjoyed, they must still hold a subordinate station in our esteem. The chief place must be allowed to things infinitely more important.

It is the *degree* of attachment, then, to earthly things which is culpable: it is the preference given to them above those which are eternal. The crime does not consist in loving them, but in loving them better than spiritual blessings. Nor is it the particular nature of the objects of our affection which in every case renders our attachment culpable. They may be innocent in themselves, they may be lawful, and it may even be blameable not to feel some regard for them; but the prohibition is directed against undue love for them, against the preference of them to better things, against

the devotion of the best affections of the heart to them—against that worldly mindedness which robs God of the glory due to him, disqualifies the mind for enjoyments of a purer kind, and casts a degree of contempt on Christ and upon all the glorious blessings which he has purchased.

We cannot serve God and mammon. The truth of this maxim is established by every day's experience. The mind which esteems the possession of earthly things as its chief good—which is absorbed in secular cares, which finds all its pleasures in worldly prosperity, and all its sorrows in the loss or the absence of temporal enjoyments—is incapacitated not only by want of time and leisure, but by its very nature for those pursuits which the Gospel requires. What impression can spiritual ideas make upon a mind sunk in carnal things? What relish for a happiness pure and holy, such a happiness as proceeds from the knowledge of God and the exercise of holy affections towards Him, can be felt by a heart absorbed in the cares and gratifications of earth? There must be a suitableness and correspondence between the mind and the objects which give it pleasure; and what concord can exist between Christ and Belial? What agreement between spiritual enjoyments and a worldly frame? No: to value the blessings which the Gospel offers; the blessings of communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son; to look forward with lively joy towards the happiness of heaven, and be engaged in the holy employments which the Gospel enjoins; in the mortification of sin, in seeking the increase of grace in the heart: this requires a disposition peculiar to itself—views and maxims, hopes and desires, pleasures and pains of a nature very different from those of the world—affections set upon things above, and not things on the earth.

True religion, as described in the Gospel, supposes the frame of mind which I have described to have been produced by a sound judgment and enlightened understanding, perceiving the superior value of eternal

things, and therefore deliberately choosing them. The holy disposition of a Christian is not the offspring of superstition, or of a melancholy constitution, or of a servile fear of the punishment of God, or of a weak attachment to the doctrines and maxims of a party: no—it is the product of mature deliberation; it is the result of the purest reason; it is founded upon the deep conviction that eternity is superior to time, the soul to the body, the next world to the present, holiness to sin, and the favour of God to that of man.

This is then the ground and foundation of a Christian's deadness to the world: he is deeply impressed with a sense of the supreme importance of eternal objects, and acts upon that conviction: the course of his life is ordered in such a manner as shall not prevent his attention to the great concern of the soul. The employment of his leisure hours, the choice of his company, his very diversions are so regulated, that in the pursuit of the one thing needful he is at least never impeded by them. His desires are chiefly bent on the favour of God, and the enjoyment of his grace; so that nothing affords him satisfaction while he perceives his soul to be destitute of spiritual light and life. His principal hopes and wishes, for himself, for his children and for his friends, are directed towards greater measures of obedience, of resignation, of purity of heart, and love to God and to Christ. He derives a livelier pleasure from the perception of his moral improvement than from the increase of his temporal prosperity. Thus the Psalmist expresses his feelings: "Thou hast put joy and gladness into my heart more than" the worldly minded feel "when their corn and wine and oil increase."

II. The question, therefore, recurs, Will not such a supreme attachment to eternal things be inconsistent with a necessary attention to the affairs of life?

That such a principle will have some effect in lessening our relish for the enjoyments of the world; that it will diminish our extreme anxiety respecting the success of our projects; that it will cool the ardour with

which we plan scheme after scheme, and pursue folly after folly; that it will make us less extravagant in our joy when we are prosperous, and less depressed under adversity; that it will moderate our eagerness in business, and render us less anxious to grasp at every offered or imagined advantage, I readily allow. And allowing this, what is the amount of the evil, considered even in a *temporal* view? An inordinate haste to be rich, or, in other words, an intemperate love of earthly things, is a far more frequent source of failure than of success. But if we consider the question in a *moral* light, it will appear that an excessive attachment to the world is the very bane of virtue. It is this disposition which in a thousand instances has produced and cherished a ruinous spirit of luxury and dissipation. It is this which either instigates dishonesty and fraud, or palliates or conceals their guilt. It is this which, taking another turn, stifles every generous emotion of the mind, and locks up every noble feeling in covetousness. It is this which leaves no time or inclination for prayer or self-examination, or serious reflection; which incapacitates the mind for love to God, reverence for his authority, submission to his will, and every serious desire for conformity to his image; and it is this which renders the cup of misery doubly bitter, and unfits us for bearing with temper and cheerfulness the various trials and misfortunes to which we are subject.

Where, then is the evil of correcting such a disposition? Could I call before you but a few of that vast multitude, who having sacrificed their health, their reputation, their peace and their comfort to the world, at length devoted to the same idol their lives, and even their immortal souls, they should be my witnesses; they should, in the most affecting terms, dictated by the remembrance of bitter sufferings, repeat the exhortation, "Set not your affection on things on the earth."

I am not afraid also to allow, that heavenly-mindedness would have a considerable effect in unfitting a

person for entering with spirit into many of the diversions and gaities of the age.' Nor can I think that this would prove an irreparable injury to the happiness of mankind, when I observe that those enjoyments which arise from the tender relations of domestic life—enjoyments which God has given to man as his proper pleasures—might increase in proportion as the love of dissipation declined: that intellectual and moral improvements; and, above all, the pleasures of a purer kind, similar to those of the blessed spirits above, might be substituted for these frivolous gratifications.

I will further allow, that the degree of heavenly mindedness which the Scripture inculcates would have some tendency to disqualify us for an indiscriminate enjoyment of the society of the world, for the strain of conversation which prevails in some companies, for the scenes which give them delight, for the spirit of flattery and insincerity which prevails in them, for the schemes which they form, and the mirth in which they indulge. For these things a Christian would be but ill prepared by his previous prayers, by his deep sense of the vanity of the world, and of the importance of time. He might be grave; and though his heart overflowed with benevolence, he might in such society be esteemed morose; and both he and they would perceive that there was no mutual sympathy of tastes or habits. But what would he lose by this? He would enjoy an intimate society with the virtuous and excellent of the earth—a society which, founded upon the basis of truth and righteousness, would continually be more and more firmly established and cemented. He would be joined in one spirit to the holy church throughout the world, to the Prophets and Apostles, and to Jesus Christ his Lord.

I have thus allowed that a spirit of heavenly mindedness would, in a certain degree, disqualify a man for the world. It might undoubtedly hinder him from raising himself to so great a degree of wealth, honour, or reputation as he otherwise might attain: but I must

at the same time insist, that it would by no means prevent a *due and proper attention* to the necessary business of life.

Heavenly mindedness consists in a strong attachment to God, and to spiritual objects. But it is not every strong passion or desire which unfits men for the business of life. Consider, for instance the love which God hath implanted in the breast of a parent for his children;—a love which all parents will feel to be supreme; a love for which great sacrifices will be made, great anxieties often endured, and by which the schemes and plans of life will be greatly regulated. This is a natural and most powerful passion, which yet is not inconsistent with a due attention to the affairs of life, but rather promotes activity and diligence; while it inspires prudence. Heavenly mindedness will possess a similar influence. Reverence for the will of God will produce effects at least as considerable as parental love. It will make us regard the diligent and skilful discharge of our worldly business as a solemn duty. God has placed us in our station: he has required from us fidelity in them: nor can I form an idea of any real heavenly mindedness which does not produce ready and cheerful obedience. Here, then, is the difference: it is in the motive, rather than the outward conduct, by which the Christian is distinguished from other men. The latter is diligent and active from a temporal and sordid self interest: he whose affections are principally set on another world, acts with no less resolution, and with equal energy, but from juster views. His principle is permanent and consistent: it accompanies him through all the stages of life, and in all its various employments: it gives to his conduct in the secular affairs of his station, a character of stedfastness and firmness which can be derived from no lower motive.

Indeed, we want not numerous examples to prove that every just and honourable station in life may be filled with propriety and dignity by men of a heavenly mind. I need not refer to ancient times: to Daniel, the

man greatly beloved by God, and the prophet of the Most High, who was at the same time the minister of a vast empire for four successive reigns. We have more recent and familiar proofs, that the greatest eminence in commerce, in medicine, in law, and even in the profession of arms, may consist with the deepest and most habitual devotion: witness the names of Barnard, of Boerhave, of Hale, and of Gardiner.

The influence which heavenly mindedness will also produce upon the social relations is worthy of remark. It does not unfit the Christian for them: it does not render him austere and rigid, or harden him against the tenderness of friendship and domestic affection. No: though he is afraid to idolize any creature; though he watches over his parental and conjugal feelings, lest they should draw aside his heart from submission to the will of God, or supreme regard to his authority; yet he does indulge them with gratitude and with fervour. He receives every comfort as from God's hand, and enjoys it as the fruit of his bounty. Still it is his unceasing care, that, by all the blessings which surround him, he may be led to shew forth the praise of his Supreme Benefactor, not with his lips only, but in his life.

"Set," therefore, "your affection on things above."

To enforce this exhortation, the Apostle refers to that argument which is among the most efficacious with Christians: "*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God: for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*" That is, If you are risen indeed with Christ; if you are so united to him, and as it were incorporated with him, that he is become your life, the principle and source of your spiritual existence: if your interests are so identified with his, that because he lives you shall live also, because he was raised from the dead you shall be raised also; then it becomes your duty to carry still further the relation and union which you bear to him. You must be with

him in spirit. He is risen to a world of glory, and you must dwell with him in spirit in that world of glory also. Your life is to be bound up in his—you must live only in him: therefore, since he has left this evil world, and has left it desolate by his absence, you must be widowed to it: you must consider yourself as dead here: there is nothing in this barren scene which should afford you solid pleasure, now that your Lord is departed. Your life is now hid, or laid up, with Christ: there all your hopes are fixed, there all your happiness is reposed. Set your affection, therefore, on things above—on that blessed place where is to be found the beloved Object of your hopes and affections, who hath redeemed your souls and delivered you from eternal death. Let your affections often soar upwards, and contemplate the glory of that kingdom in which he reigns, the happiness of those who dwell with him, the excellence and purity of those who with him are made perfect. Anticipate in joyful prospect the day when you shall yourselves be raised to the same place whither your Saviour has gone before; where you shall see Him “whom having not seen you love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Anticipate by faith the time when you shall enjoy the full completion of his great salvation; when every taint and blot of sin will be perfectly removed; when every excellence will be implanted in the soul; when every evil will be annihilated; when every obstacle between you and the full enjoyment of the Divine Presence will be taken away; when you shall fall down before him, with all the redeemed of God, and cast your crowns at his feet, and say, with unutterable fervour and joy, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing.”

See, my brethren, how ardently the Apostles fixed their thoughts upon Jesus Christ, how they identified themselves with him, how from him they derived all

their hopes and all their joys. Christ was the object of all their desires: to him they looked as their Redeemer, their Saviour, their Intercessor, their High Priest and Advocate, their model and example, the Author and Giver of all their good things. Let their example lead us to inquire whether we are actuated by a similar regard for Jesus Christ; whether our thoughts, like theirs, are continually fixed on our Lord and Saviour; whether we long to be with him, esteeming ourselves dead to this world in order that our life may be more conformed to the happiness which he enjoys, and which he communicates to his faithful disciples now with him in glory.

And let us also frequently ponder on the excellency of those things which are above as compared with the things which are on earth. There, where our blessed Saviour dwells, every thing is pure and perfect: there, no stain of sin or defilement is found: here every thing is corrupt; marred, and defaced, and spoiled, and polluted by sin. Every thing above is durable and eternal: every thing below is transitory and fading. Every thing above carries with it the full blessing of Almighty God: every thing below withers beneath the influence of his just and holy indignation. Every thing above satisfies the soul; for the desires are formed to the place and the place to the desires, and both are adapted to the enjoyment of the highest and purest happiness: every thing below is in its own nature uncertain, disappoints our expectations, and deludes our hopes. Every thing above breathes the air of eternal bliss; for every possible cause of unhappiness is studiously excluded by Almighty Power and Wisdom: every thing below tends to unhappiness; for our joys are imperfect, our comforts are uncertain, we ourselves are decaying, and all around us proclaims, Seek not your happiness in this uncertain state.

Influenced by such considerations, let us endeavour, my brethren, to elevate and exalt our souls to nobler pursuits and loftier prospects than these transitory

scenes afford. We are immortal creatures, born for eternity, redeemed by Christ from sin that we may dwell in an eternal and endless world, and therefore we should cherish the sentiments natural to the citizens of that glorious and eternal state. Oh! if we value Christ as our Saviour, and prize that blessed immortality which he offers, let us prove our regard for it by often meditating upon its joys, by comparing its nature and happiness with those things which are continually passing before us, by exalting our views and animating our Christian hopes. O let us not feel, and think, and live, and act as if the Saviour of the world had never come down from heaven to save us; as if we never had heard the glad tidings of great joy, of Christ, or of heaven; as if this world were the only world: as if this short, and poor and transitory life were the sum of our existence! O let us not so degrade ourselves, and so debase the Lord who has bought us, and so trample on the glorious hopes he has set before us! Lift up your hearts then. Let the recollection of the ascension of your Saviour cause your hearts to ascend also. Rise to the blissful place where he now lives. Contemplate him standing at the right hand of God, interceding for his people, and preparing for them mansions of glory; and let your spirit join with the spirits of all the redeemed in hailing the day of his triumph, when he shall come to summon his people to his kingdom; and let your hearts say, with them, Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. *Amen.*

SERMON XVII.

ON INTERCESSION FOR OTHERS.

1 Timothy ii. 1.

I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.

AMONG the many proofs of Christianity, some are abstruse, and cannot be understood without a considerable share of learning; others are plainer, and intelligible to the most illiterate. My text naturally suggests one of these. It is very obvious that there must be a certain degree of resemblance between every work and the author who has composed it: it must bear some image of his mind and character. Now read the Gospel of Christ; consider the spirit which pervades it, and the principles it inculcates; and say whose image it bears. Is it like the work of the great Father of mankind? Does it bear the stamp of that gracious Being who reigns in light and happiness ineffable among the blessed spirits of heaven, diffusing there universal peace, and harmony, and joy? The work of such a Being cannot be of a doubtful character: it must ex-

hibit a certain lustre of purity and glow of love, and must manifest the true method of enjoying the highest happiness. Try the Gospel by this test, and say, is it not the work of God?

I scruple not to assert, that the words of my text alone prove it to be so. Behold in them the feelings of a man who had imbibed the spirit of the Gospel. It found him injurious, revengeful, breathing out threatening and slaughter against his fellow-creatures—now he utters nothing but the purest and most ardent love for every child of Adam. For those whom he had not seen in the flesh he pours out his whole soul before God in earnest supplication for their happiness: “I would that ye knew what great conflict I had for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be comforted.” The Jews, his inveterate persecutors, he loved with a like ardour: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer for Israel is, that they might be saved..... I would even wish myself accursed from Christ for their sake.” What, but the Spirit of God, could have produced such a spirit, and such solicitude for the happiness of strangers and of enemies, in the heart of man, naturally so interested and selfish?

I am led by these words to consider the great Christian duty of praying for others. Perhaps there is none more neglected, with so little consciousness of sin in the omission of it. Yet that it is positively enjoined on Christians is apparent, not from the text merely, but from many other passages of Scripture. “Pray one for another,” saith St. James, “that ye may be healed.” It is enforced by the example of the most eminent saints. Thus Abraham interceded with God for Sodom; and He said, in answer to his prayer, “I will not destroy it for ten’s sake.” Moses, the illustrious type of the great Intercessor, prayed for the people: and we learn that God would have destroyed the Israelites, had not Moses his chosen stood in the gap: “I prayed,” saith he, “unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, de-

stroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness." "God forbid," said Samuel, "that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." The Psalmist exhorts to pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "They shall prosper that love thee.....Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces." Isaiah expresses his determination not to hold his peace for Zion's sake, and for Jerusalem not to rest "until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Daniel humbled himself before God day and night, and fasted and prayed for the sins of the Jews.—Our blessed Lord, the great Intercessor, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, is the most eminent example of concern for others, and has taught us to regard him in the endearing character of our High Priest, who is continually making intercession for us. Animated by his example, and inspired with the spirit of his religion, his Apostles abounded in prayer for all men:—"I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers"—"What thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith"—"I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me"—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication.....for all saints."

I would not, however, enforce this duty merely, or chiefly, because it is enjoined to us by the precepts and recommended to us by the practice of Patriarchs, Judges, Psalmists, Prophets, and Apostles, and of him who is in all respects our great Example: it is rather because this duty is included within the general obligation of Christian love, of which it forms an essential part.

It is the great distinction between the Law and the Gospel, that the former contained a great variety of positive ordinances; while the latter inculcates general principles, which we are left to act upon and apply in particular cases as they arise. Men were required to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and soul, and strength; and when this principle was once established in their hearts, no positive precept was necessary to direct them to serve God in any particular instance. As, while our children are infants, we govern them by positive rules, and point out minutely the conduct they are to pursue or to avoid; but in their more mature years increasing knowledge leads them to regard their parents as their kindest benefactors; confirms their attachment and obedience; and duty ripens into a sacred affection; love becomes the interpreter of their duty, and suggests innumerable acts of obedience and affection, to which no positive rules, however minute, could have extended;—so, in the duty of intercession for others, even had it not been expressly commanded, yet every real disciple of Christ, who has learnt to love his neighbour as himself, to mortify the selfish spirit natural to our corrupt state, and to act from enlarged feelings of benevolence, will not need an express command to pray for his brethren. He will frequently, I might say involuntarily, express his compassion and love for his neighbour at the Throne of Grace, by imploring for him those blessings which he laments his own inability to bestow. He will not inquire whether he must do this, or whether it is expressly enjoined; but he will perform it as a relief to his feelings, as an act in which he rejoices to engage.

Leaving, therefore, the question of the duty of intercession, I proceed to consider its advantages. It is needless here to inquire into the general reasons why prayer, either for ourselves or others, is attended with benefit; it is sufficient to say, that this is the mode which God has appointed for the display of his goodness to man. We do not by our prayers *persuade* God

to do that which he otherwise would not have done; but when we supplicate his mercy, we are using those means of grace which he has appointed, and which he has promised to bless. Yet we can in some measure understand how the prayers we offer promote our own welfare as well as that of those for whom we pray. And,

I. Intercession for others may be considered as the means of exciting benevolent affections in ourselves.

Ask me, what is the glory of an Angel above a devil? I answer, it is the spirit of love which animates the one, of which the other is destitute. It is not the absence of external splendour, it is not the suffering and misery, it is the want of benevolence, by which a fallen spirit is degraded, and which makes him odious.—Ask me, what is the peculiar glory of the Gospel above every other religion? I reply, It is the spirit of love which breathes in it. God is Love; and the Gospel, which contains his image, is a display of the most disinterested, perfect, and extensive love which the tongue can describe, or the imagination conceive.—Ask me, What is the effect which the Gospel produces in him who receives it in truth? My answer is, it teaches him to love: it annihilates his selfishness: it expands his nature: it fills him with love to God and to man: it fashions him anew after the image of God. And what is this image? “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God.”

The new creature, then, is formed by the Spirit of God to feel the noblest of passions which can animate the human breast; and as all graces are nourished and increased by their exercise, so the love of a Christian is to be kept in continual action, that he may be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, where love is made perfect.—The providence of God seems purposely to have placed him in a scene where the exercise of love is needed, and his benevolent affections continually called forth; where wants and miseries present themselves on every side amongst his fellow-creatures and his friends. What can he do for them? His

own means are insufficient to relieve them; but he can pray; he can implore God to supply what he cannot do. The overflowings of his charity are received in the channel of intercession, and thus full scope is afforded for his benevolent affections; and while he prays, the spirit of love is kindled. No other act so powerfully excites his tenderness. At the Throne of Grace every petty jealousy is forgotten, we forgive the little injuries we have received; the soul, in communion with God, contemplating him as the Father of his creatures and the Fountain of all good, acquires some distant resemblance of his unutterable love, reflects some faint beam of his goodness, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory.

Have you a Friend? Go the Throne of Grace, and there exalt and refine your friendship; there enumerate all his wants; think over all the real blessings which your indulgent love would wish him to enjoy; give full scope to the ardour of your feelings; consider all the snares to which he is exposed, all the failings which your anxious regard for him would wish to be corrected; spread before God these wishes of your soul; pray that he may be enriched by the God of all grace with all spiritual blessings; draw out your heart with love towards him: let this be at once the proof and the solace of your friendship. In your different addresses to God, let not one in the whole circle of your friends be forgotten; and surely this will expand the soul, and give the richest and the most delightful, because the most noble, enjoyment of true love and affection.

Have you a dear relation sick or afflicted? Do not shrink from partaking in his grief; endeavour not to banish him from your thoughts; repine not at his sorrows with unavailing pity, but pour out your heart before the Father of mercies: pray that he would remove the trial, if it be his will; or if not, that he would impart strength to bear and grace to profit by it. Thus your friendship, elevated by religion, will share the sorrows of those you love, without repining, and convert

even those afflictions into the means of heightening your affection.

Are you indebted to a generous Benefactor, to whom you cannot repay the debt of gratitude? O what a just and noble return may you render him by your prayers! Cherish your gratitude, and keep alive the remembrance of your obligation; but, instead of an unreasonable depression under the sense of your inability to make any recompense, supplicate the God of all grace to pour out his blessings on your benefactor, and to return his benefits abundantly into his bosom.

Do you feel the decay of friendship for those you once loved? Has your sensibility been extinguished by a growing attachment to the world, by an increasing attention to selfish interests? Rekindle this holy flame by fervent prayer. Call to remembrance before the Throne of God the friend separated from you by oceans, by the globe, and the warm effusions of love will again excite the hallowed flame. Selfishness is the bane of friendship; but fervent prayer teaches us to live not for ourselves, but for others.

Have you a Pastor who watches over your souls? O return for him those prayers he offers for you! How animating would it be to your minister to consider his flock as remembering him before God! With what hope, what comfort, what joy would he minister before you, could he believe that your prayers had already ascended for him to the Throne of Grace! What a sacred union would it produce! How just an image would it exhibit of that intimate and endearing connexion which subsists between the different members of the church of Christ!

See in these instances the communion of saints. Thus have they fellowship with each other, and with their common Head. Thus is Christian love produced and cherished in them. They learn to drop their animosities, and forgive as they hope to be forgiven. Their love is excited, preserved, and purified. They descend from the mount with their countenances glowing with

the warmth of tenderness for those on whose behalf they have been interceding there. This is their bond of union; the secret but powerful spring of affection unknown to the world, and producing an unfailing supply of increasing benevolence.

II. Intercession for others will also produce the spirit of love in those for whom we pray.—Love creates love. You cannot meet your friend, after your heart has been engaged in fervent supplication for him, without expressing that genuine tenderness which will produce a reciprocal regard in him. Why do you so often meet your friend as a stranger? Why do you meet without affection? Why that cool look, that uninteresting demeanour? How different would have been the feelings of each, had each been engaged in fervent prayer for the other!

Intercession enlarges the exercise of friendship: it opens a new source of love. Let not a Christian say, I am forsaken—I meet with no acts of kindness. Has he then no Christian friends? Let him think of them as interceding for him. Is he in trouble, in perplexity, in suffering? O what a consolation to remember, that those whom he best loves are wrestling in his behalf before the Father of Mercies! What an encouragement! Hard indeed must be the heart which is not moved by such a reflection. It transports a man into a new world: it connects him by the tenderest bond of union with all the holy and pure spirits by whom, even in this corrupt state, he is surrounded: it gives him the only true and exalted enjoyment of friendship.

Intercession for our friends refines our friendship, and redeems it from those debasing feelings by which the attachments of wordly men are so often degraded. The highest act of the ordinary friendships of the world is to promote the temporal advancement, or the idle if not the vicious inclinations, of those we love. But when we pray for those we love, what are the blessings we ask? Not surely those which are gross and carnal, nor those only which are temporal and transitory. We

pray that grace may be imparted to them; that they may attain a just knowledge of themselves, and of God; that they may grow in love to him, in purity of heart and life, in tenderness and compassion to mankind. How new a character do these prayers give to friendship! They teach us what friendship ought to be. So far as the prayer is heard and accepted, it moulds the character of our friend into a more holy and lovely form: and this pure, this generous, this holy friendship, can attract a warmth and constancy of affection which even death itself cannot extinguish. Compared with this, how cold and poor is the friendship of the world; how sordid its principles, how transitory its duration!

III. The third advantage of intercession for our friends, consists in its exciting our love towards God. —This is its direct influence. Can you go the Father of Mercies day by day, imploring blessings upon all you love;—can you diversify these petitions, adapting them to the various necessities, sorrows, and circumstances of your friends, asking benefits of every kind, spiritual and temporal;—can you daily renew, and urge, and vary these claims; and do you not exclaim, How infinite the riches, how boundless the power, how vast the bounty of the Being I address! He is the Giver of all good things to my children, to my friend, to my neighbour, to my country, to the whole world, to the universe! Whatever good I want, whatever good those I love can receive; all, all must come from that rich Source of all good which never fails.—Do not these reflections, then, establish a closer, a more endearing, relation between thee and God? Is not that friendship which engages thee in prayer, the means of explaining and magnifying the goodness of thy Heavenly Father? Is thy friend blessed? It is He who has blessed him. If thou lovest thy friend, wilt thou not love thy God, who is the Author of his happiness? Thus, then, Christian love, conducted on Christian principles, reveals the great and surpassing love of God, and honours his holy Name; and thus, when we indeed love

our neighbour as ourselves, we are led to love our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind and all our strength.

IV. The last advantage which I shall mention in intercession for our Friends, is, that it is the direct means of promoting their welfare.—Even were it attended with no direct and positive benefit communicated to our friends on account of it, what I have hitherto said would not be the less true. But far be it from us to indulge such a supposition! On the contrary, there is the most distinct proof that our prayers do materially tend to the prosperity and welfare of those for whom we pray. It appears to be a universal law in the moral government of the world, that the blessings of God are communicated to us through the intervention of others. We are so united and knit together, that we can scarcely name a benefit which is not imparted to us through the instrumentality of our fellow-creatures. A large share of our comforts and happiness is given to us by means of the tender care and solicitude of our parents, through the sympathy and kindness of our relations and friends. Unless we admit this to be the *appointed* order of the Supreme Ruler of the world, we must suppose that one of the most important parts of the œconomy of human life is a matter of accident and chance. Why, then, may not God grant to the prayers of his people blessings which otherwise they would not have obtained? Why, when he intends to bless, may he not do so through the medium of prayer and intercession? Can any thing be more consonant to the general analogy and constitution of the world? Even the great benefits of redemption are conveyed to us through the intercession of the Redeemer. What an example did he exhibit of the performance of this duty! He prayed whole nights together. He watched over his disciples, and prayed that their faith might not fail. Even on the cross he was engaged in intercession, and that for his enemies. It is now his peculiar office to intercede for us, and to present our prayers to the Fa-

ther. We are taught to pray in his name. In the Jewish dispensation, a peculiar tribe was set apart to make intercession for the people. The whole system of the Divine administration is a system of intercession. Let us not think, then, that our prayers are in vain. The pious supplications of a parent are often crowned by the communication of grace to his child. The tender supplications of a friend may be the means of communicating support and consolation to the unhappy. I am persuaded not only that intercession is useful, but that we really possess the means of communicating by our prayers most important and substantial benefit to our friends; and I think we should be fully convinced of this truth, if we acquired a juster view of the character of God, and attained a more perfect conception of the laws by which he governs his creatures.

I would conclude, therefore, by exhorting those who may imagine that their weakness or poverty disables them from assisting others, to correct so erroneous an opinion. You can exert a most beneficial influence in their behalf: you can pray for those you wish to serve, and in this way can manifest your gratitude to those to whom you are indebted.

Let us learn from this subject the true method of perpetuating and ennobling friendship.--You complain that the love of your friends decays, and that your own attachment towards them is diminished. You complain of mutual jealousies, of suspicions and slights, which chill the ardour of your former tenderness. These are sure indications that your friendship is a mere worldly attachment. Affection commenced in right principles, cemented by religion, and often sealed and confirmed by mutual prayer, would not thus easily decay. Examine, then, the foundation, the object, and the character of your friendships. That only deserves the name which aims at the spiritual and eternal good of him you love. That connexion does not deserve the name, which can flatter the vices or minister to the corrupt propensities of

a friend, or which has no other object than the promotion of his worldly interest and present gratification.

Finally, let us learn who has been our truest Friend, to whom we have been most indebted. Think often of Him who has laboured the most for your welfare; who has most watched over your soul, and prayed the most effectually for you. Think of Him who now liveth to make intercession for you. That Friend is Christ. Accustom yourself to consider him in this character. Confide, then, in his love; commit yourself to his care; and humbly follow him whithersoever he leadeth you. He will conduct you at length to the seat of true and perfect love, of never failing friendship.

SERMON XVIII.

ON THE MOTIVES TO CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

Romans xii. 1.

*I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of
God——.*

THERE are several motives which may influence the mind to obey and serve God; and these are distinguished from each other by their purity and excellence, and by the force with which they operate.

I. The first of these is, *fear of the Divine punishments.*

When we reflect on the tremendous effects of the anger of God, on the nature of eternal punishment, on the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched; when we consider how strongly, how frequently, and with what solemnity, eternal woe is denounced against impenitent transgressors, we are astonished that men are not absolutely overwhelmed with terror lest they should be condemned at the tribunal of God; yet, in fact, it is rarely that we perceive

this fear operating in a very extensive degree. Loose and unfounded views of the mercy of God often prevent his terrors from affecting the mind. Every man flatters himself that his own case is not so peculiarly atrocious as to warrant a punishment so dreadful. At present he feels no particular suffering in consequence of the justice of God; and the vengeance which is threatened hereafter is remote and perhaps uncertain. Hence the fear of punishment is seldom a powerful restraint from sin. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

There are cases, indeed, in which the terrors of the Lord operate with their due force. When conscience is roused from its insensibility; when the Spirit of God sets before the soul the denunciations of Divine wrath; when the imagination pictures to itself the horrors of eternal condemnation; when the understanding admits the probability, and is convinced of the justice, of the threatened punishment—at such times terror produces the most powerful effects: it enforces the severest penances; it bends the knee in constant supplication: it sometimes depresses the mind to the abyss of despair, or even drives it to distraction. "Thy terrors have I suffered with a troubled mind." "When thou with rebukes dost chasten man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment." "My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long: (for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:) my moisture was turned into the drought of summer."

There are particular constitutions on which terror is especially calculated to operate. There are peculiar states of mind in which the heart is more than commonly alive to these emotions. There are sins so gross and aggravated that the most hardened heart cannot reflect on them without anguish and dismay. Yet fear is an imperfect principle. It does not purify the mind—it may consist with the greatest love of sin. It may pre-

vent the commission of crimes from no higher principle than that of self love. The heart resumes its original bias when alarm and danger have passed away. However useful therefore, in its proper place, and to a limited extent, the fear of Divine punishment may be, it is not that motive which has the greatest efficacy in subduing sin.

II. *Regard to our own interest* is another motive to Christian obedience. Though less violent and powerful in its effects, it is more general and prevalent than the motive of terror; and though the importance and utility of it is not to be disputed, it must, in common with fear, be admitted to be an imperfect principle of action. There are few who have not even a deep sense of the misery and evils of sin, and of the temporal and eternal advantages of righteousness. Most men have learned these lessons from their own experience; and all have seen the gall and bitterness of sin in the lives of others. A very slight acquaintance with the world is enough to prove the confusion which sin produces in society; the ruin to which it exposes families; the loss of reputation which follows it; the anguish of mind and remorse by which it is succeeded, and which are only the just forebodings of miseries more dreadful, and of an irretrievable destruction hereafter. On the other hand, the most inattentive observer cannot fail to perceive the respect which even bad men pay to the character of the righteous; the peace of mind which he enjoys; the useful and important station which he acquires in his own social circle; his resources in the deepest gloom and wretchedness; the hopes of eternal happiness which cheer his heart; and the tranquillity with which he anticipates the dissolution of his body. "Let me," said Balaam, "die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And doubtless this observation of the blessings which attend a life of righteousness has influenced many to renounce their sinful courses, and to live a sober, righteous, and godly life. I am so fully persuaded that this is among those

habitual motives which the Spirit of God suggests for our growth in holiness, and I feel so strongly our need of every help in running the arduous race set before us, that I would not without great tenderness and jealousy, venture, in the slightest degree, to derogate from the importance of this principle. I fear lest I, or any of the ministers of Christ, should thus deprive our hearers of a motive of great efficacy, and unexceptionable in itself, without substituting one still more powerful in its place. Yet with this caution I must be allowed to observe, that this principle is not so pure in its origin as that which is to produce holiness ought to be: it is closely allied to mere selfishness; it does not sufficiently refer to the glory of God, and to the real intrinsic excellence of holiness. In its influence, also, it is *comparatively* weak: it will scarcely withstand a powerful temptation, or enable us to decline immediate indulgence, and submit to painful self-denial. It does not lead to high Christian attainments: it is content to keep just within the pale of safety. It does not induce us to be fearless of unjust reproach: it leaves us disposed to compromise with the world, to dread the charge of enthusiasm, and to reduce religion to that moderate and easy profession which requires no exertion, incurs no risk, and demands no sacrifice or self-denial. Without any higher motive, we should be satisfied to prevent distress of conscience, without aspiring to higher degrees of virtue. This alone cannot elevate the soul to any lofty undertakings, nor inspire it with benevolent zeal, nor prompt it to honourable exertions.

III. The third motive to Christian obedience which I shall notice, is *the sense of duty*: in which we recognize a higher and purer principle of action. Happy is that man who acts habitually from a conscientious determination to obey the will of God—who will not be influenced by any sensual or worldly object to deviate from the path which conscience enjoins him to pursue. Without this high and steadfast sense of duty there can

be no excellence, no virtue, no religion. Every real Christian has submitted himself to the direction of conscience. Without this the very ground and foundation of piety is wanting.

But it is not enough that we act from a sense of duty—that is, that we feel a powerful obligation to pursue a particular course of conduct, and to avoid whatever is inconsistent with it. We must inquire on what ground our sense of duty is founded—*why* we are obliged to adopt one course of conduct rather than another. It is possible to have a high sense of duty, and even to act consistently from it, without any deep reverence to God—without any love to Christ, or any particular regard to him—without any of those affections which Christianity requires, or which are peculiar to it. Thus, men often endure the fatigues and dangers of a military life, or the anxieties and labour of high civil offices, from a sense of duty, which is not in the least degree connected with religious principle. The opinions and customs of the world require from men in those situations an eminent devotion to the service of the public; and they engage in that service with constancy and zeal, because the world is the master they serve, whose rewards they desire, and whose approbation is their highest glory. And thus in our domestic relations also, a man may discharge his duty assiduously, as a father, a husband, or a neighbour, and may feel much shame and compunction for neglecting it, while, in reality he is acting from a regard to character, and from deference to the current maxims and opinions of society. The sense of duty is not seldom a motive to action, even in cases where the views of duty are confined and erroneous, or even radically corrupt.

IV. Let us next consider a principle much less liable to exception: *gratitude to God for his goodness to us*.—God is the fountain of all good, the source of all religion, and the centre of all excellence; and in proportion as our motives have reference to him, they ap-

proach to that principle which alone is really pure and excellent. When, therefore, our hearts are filled with the remembrance of his loving-kindness to us, and we are thus constrained to obey and serve him, we are acting from a principle which has him alone for its object, and which he will graciously approve. Still, however, our gratitude to God is not that motive which leads to the highest attainments in religion. It may chiefly have respect to his temporal mercies. A man whom God has blessed with health and riches, whom he has distinguished from the multitude by an accumulation of prosperity, may feel the most grateful emotions to the Author of his happiness, and in the gladness of his heart may ascribe to him glory and praise: he may be led to regulate his life by the precepts of his Benefactor, and rejoice to manifest his thankfulness by those occasional sacrifices which enhance rather than interrupt his felicity. Yet had it pleased God to withhold his temporal mercies, perhaps these feelings would have passed away, and murmuring and despair would have succeeded to this joyful obedience. Thus Satan objected, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face."—The complacency and satisfaction we feel in the blessings that surround us, and the gratitude they excite, are easily mistaken for religion. But true religion is of a much higher nature: it will bless the name of the Lord when he takes away, as well as when he gives. True Religion shines forth in holy confidence and love, when the heavens lower with blackness, when the face of God is hidden, when the storms of heaven beat around us with desolating fury, and lay waste every pleasant prospect and destroy every pleasing hope. Even then her voice is heard in

songs of praise, her heart is filled with meek resignation and pious reverence. True religion forms such lofty conceptions of spiritual and eternal blessings, that those of time and sense are comparatively worthless in her esteem. She is grateful chiefly for the gift of Jesus Christ, for the influence of the Holy spirit, for the guidance and consolation of the Scriptures, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory. She gives thanks to God for temporal prosperity; but considers it a dubious blessing, and rejoices with trembling.

V. Let us then proceed to contemplate the purest and highest motive to Christian obedience: a motive to which no exception can be made; which sanctifies the heart while it renders glory to God. It is *the love of God*;—a sense of gratitude not merely for his mercies to ourselves, but for those which he has vouchsafed to all the children of men: the love of his infinite goodness, and of his glorious perfections. This is the principle which inspired the breast of the Prophets and Apostles: this kindled the devout affections of the Patriarchs and holy men of old: this animated the martyrs to endure sufferings and death: this has glowed in the bosom of every member of the holy catholic church, and has disposed him to obey and serve God in a manner acceptable to him, and with a worship pure in its origin and excellent in its effects.

I would not be understood to assert, that a true Christian is never influenced by the other motives I have noticed. On the contrary, he is governed by them all in a greater or less degree: but he is chiefly influenced by that love of God which exceeds every other principle in energy as well as in purity. There are different circumstances in which each of these motives has its appropriate and salutary influence. When a sinner first begins to seek salvation, or when a Christian falls into sin, or when the conscience becomes stupified by repeated transgressions, the heart may be justly alarmed and roused by the fear of the judgments of God. At certain times, and on some occasions, this

may be a more necessary and effectual stimulus than love. The denunciations of God against sinners may be required to rouse the dormant feelings of contrition and penitence, and to prepare the mind for the reception of higher and better motives. It is to administer poison to the soul to discourse to an impenitent sinner only on the love of God, or only to exhort him to gratitude for his spiritual mercies. The justice of God is that topic on which he should be led to dwell: the holiness of God is the attribute which immediately concerns him. The fear of Divine punishment is necessary to guard against the perversion or abuse of every higher motive. In his present state of corruption and infirmity, man could not safely be released from the restraints which the fear of Divine displeasure imposes. Hence St. Paul warned his disciples, as well as encouraged them: "warning every man, and teaching every man." Hence he admonishes the Hebrews to take heed, "lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin . . . lest there should be in any of them an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God . . . for we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end. . . . Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any should seem to come short of it."

In like manner, a regard for our own interest is an important motive, although subordinate to the love of God. It will have great influence at times; and it is never unimportant to be deeply convinced that we can find no happiness in the ways sin, that God is the only source of true and solid happiness, and that in keeping his commandments there is great reward. No opinion can be more just than this: none better calculated to keep the mind stedfast in its pursuit of religion, when tempted by apparent advantage to deviate from the right path. All such motives, although not the noblest and strongest principles of action, should be strengthened and cherished.—Thus, also, a sacred regard to

duty should be ever maintained and cultivated. Let not the liberty with which Christ has made us free, degenerate into licentiousness. Let us not let our higher motives, unless we feel the full force of those that are lower, but which perhaps, on that very account, are more imperiously binding on us. Conscience is God's vicegerent; and he who is not scrupulously upright in the faithful discharge of every branch of duty, does but deceive himself in supposing that he is influenced by the love of God. If a man say he loves God, and keeps not his commandments—or, in other words, does not do his duty conscientiously—he is a liar and the truth is not in him. For if a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how shall he love God whom he has not seen?—Let us cherish also gratitude to God for his temporal mercies to ourselves as individuals. None should be passed by without regard. They are the gift of God; and though we deserve not the least of them, we are bound to enjoy them with thanksgiving. There is a gloomy kind of piety, which seems to think God honoured in proportion as the affections which he has planted in us are mortified, and the gifts he has bestowed upon us are rejected. There is an abstract piety, which would so exclude every selfish consideration as to require us to love God wholly for his own sake, without any reference to the benefits which we have received from Him. Such is not the piety which the Scriptures inculcate; nor is it agreeable to the nature of man, or likely to be beneficial in its effects. I grant the inferiority of that gratitude which is selfish; I grant the inferiority of those mercies which are merely temporal: but we are men, fallen and imperfect; and the religion which may suit the nature of angels and archangels, may not be the most proper for such creatures as we are. In a word, we require every aid, and should cherish every allowable motive to piety; yet always remembering, that the grand principle to which we should aspire, is the pure love of God, derived from the sense of his infinite goodness and glorious power.

tions. The real Christian, when advanced to an eminent stage of piety, admires, and loves, and adores God for his own sake. He has long contemplated his infinite wisdom, ordering and appointing all things for the best, and in the best manner—his almighty power, pervading the universe, and accomplishing every object;—his supreme and absolute authority, ruling over every creature of his hands—his boundless and unmeasured goodness, showering down blessings in inexhaustible profusion upon angels, upon men, and upon brutes, neither neglecting nor overlooking the least considerable of the works of his hands;—his unspotted holiness, which exalts him in the esteem of all intelligent beings; yet more than even his boundless power or infinite goodness, that holiness which preserves the universe in the order and happiness in which it was created; which cuts off misery in its source, by cutting off sin, the fruitful root of all evil.

Thus every perfection of the blessed God is acknowledged and adored. His is that character which the real Christian perceives to be most excellent, and most lovely; which contains in it all that men or angels could desire: and thus is he prepared by the love of God, pure though imperfect, to chant his praises and to perform his will, in those blessed regions in which He will be better known, more fervently loved, and more faithfully obeyed, throughout the ages of eternity.

Therefore, my brethren in Christ Jesus, “I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”—I beseech you by his mercies: I do not threaten you by all the terrors of God. I might warn you by the dreadful punishment of the impenitent; set before you the lake which burneth with brimstone and fire; and alarm you by the tremendous sound of eternal judgment;—but these are the “strange works” of God. The Gospel addresses you by motives of a different kind:—“Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to

God: for he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The Gospel sets before us all the love and mercy of God. It addresses sinners in the language of kindness, of parental love:—"Why will ye die?"—"As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. . . . Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" The message upon which God sent his beloved and only Son into the world, was a message of peace: it was emphatically denominated *glad tidings of great joy*. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life: for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." "I beseech you," therefore, brethren, "by the mercies of God." Contemplate them, I entreat you, seriously. Number, if you can, the mercies which God has shewn to you. Look up to the heavens, and let that sun, shining in his strength to give you light and heat; that moon, whose mild light directs you in the hours of darkness; declare to you the mercies of his hand. Look around, and see the whole earth replenished with the goodness of the Lord on every side, proclaiming the mercy of the great Creator. Look back, and say if you can mark a single hour in which the hand of God did not confer upon you some blessing; if at the close of any one day you could say, This day I have owed nothing to God. Look forward, and if you do cherish a hope of living through eternity in bliss which our powers can neither describe nor understand, think to whom you owe so delightful a prospect. But, above all, I beseech you by that mercy which gave his only begotten Son to be your Saviour, and to die for you on the cross. Could a greater gift be given? Could a more exalted proof of the goodness and mercy of the Lord be desired? Observe the extent of his mercy. If you knew

what was the real evil of even one sin! If you knew the infinite hatred which God bears to the least pollution—a hatred of which we never can form a conception; you would then know how to appreciate that mercy which moved him not to spare his only Son, but to give him up for us all. And for what did he give his Son? That he, who was infinitely dear to him, might suffer, and might even die, for you!—that sins deep as scarlet, and numerous as the sands of the sea, might be forgiven freely, and be remembered no more! And now he offers to pardon you, and invites you to come to him for mercy and for grace.

I speak, perhaps, to some who regard the commandments of God as grievous, and consider him as an arbitrary and unreasonable Sovereign. Oh! my brethren, do these mercies of God deserve such harsh conceptions? Are such mercies as he bestows—mercies infinite in value as well as boundless in extent and number—are all these to be disregarded and despised? There is a time coming when you will feel your need of mercy; when you will call on God (alas! it may be in vain!) whose mercies you have despised. But now God calls upon you: he invites you, he entreats you, he sets before you all his mercies: and is he to be rejected? Are you to make no returns to him? I beseech you by the mercies of God. I would trust that each of your hearts has already replied, ‘Yes, Lord, I would devote myself, and all that I have and am, to thee. Thy mercies demand my heart. Tell me gracious Lord, what thou wouldest have me to do, and how I can express my sense of thy goodness.’ Hear, then, the Apostle’s words: “I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Let your lives, then, be devoted to God. Let them be spent in his service, and to his praise. The only sacrifice which he requires is, that you would regulate your lives by his holy word. This is the work, and this the disposition of the angels in heaven: do you murmur that God exalts you to their employment?

SERMON XIX.

ON THE BENEFIT OF THE SABBATH.

Nehemiah xiii. 15—18.

In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses: as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day; and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath.

THERE are some duties which cannot be performed without self-denial, or the loss of some temporal advantage: there are others which are so manifestly beneficial to us, even at present, that it would seem a matter

of no difficulty to comply with them. Of this kind is the duty of observing the Lord's Day; a duty which, whether we consider its beneficial tendency in a civil or religious light, claims our peculiar attention.

I propose to consider the appointment of the Sabbath in four different points of view—as *an acceptable rest from the toils and labours of life*, as *a highly useful civil institution*, as *a necessary religious ordinance*, and as *a sign between God and man*.

I. Let us consider it, first, as *an acceptable rest from the toils and labours of life*.

No benevolent person can look round upon his fellow-creatures, and behold so large a proportion of them doomed to severe and perpetual labour, without being deeply affected with their state. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake. In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground.” Such is the curse, and awfully it is fulfilled. Too generally do we see our fellow-creatures consuming their strength in incessant labour, and yet scarcely able to procure the necessaries of life. Is it not, then, a merciful dispensation by which, for one day in seven, the curse is as it were suspended; by which it is made even the duty of the labourer to enjoy rest, and cease from his toil? What can be a more gratifying object of contemplation than the state of the labourer on the hallowed day of rest? He rises not to renew his usual toil, but to recruit his exhausted strength, to spend his time in the bosom of his family, to sit down with them, and to enjoy the pleasures of a father, a husband, or a son. He has this day graciously allotted to him, that he may instruct his family in their duty, animate them in the discharge of it, teach them the things which belong to their eternal peace, and converse with them about that blessed world which is to come. Cold are the feelings, and cruel the heart, which could deprive the poor man of

this his portion; sometimes, alas! his only portion of rest here.

Ye, my friends, whose station compels you to labour throughout the week, hail the dawn of the Sabbath as a day propitious to you. Bless God for it, as one of his most gracious appointments: for such, when properly employed according to his intention, it will be found. Receive it with gratitude to God. And while you enjoy the rest which it affords you, let your thoughts ascend to that merciful Being, whose loving-kindness is over all his works: who doth not willingly afflict and grieve the children of men, but pities them even as a father his own son who serveth him. Account that man your enemy, not your friend, who would rob you of it, and would exact of you incessant labour, for which you would receive no greater compensation than at present. Such would necessarily be the result, if the observance of the Sabbath were generally abolished. It is *your* interest, therefore, in a more particular manner, to guard against the violation of this day, and to avoid whatever may tend to diminish the reverence due to it. But this can never be done so effectually as by your spending it in those occupations for which your gracious Father designed it. Let it not be a day of idleness and sloth, of dissipation and pleasure, but a day of religious improvement, and of peaceful enjoyment of your families. Thus you will reap the benefit which God mercifully designed for you.

II. But I consider the Sabbath, secondly, as a *civil institution*.

I wish, my brethren, ever to impress upon your minds and my own the important reflection, that the good of man and the observance of God's precepts are inseparably connected with each other. God is the wise and gracious Father of his creatures. He therefore ordains nothing which does not originate in the design of doing them good, and which does not in the wisest manner conduce to that end. Religion is designed to be the greatest civil benefit: and thus it is

constantly found that the most religious nation is the happiest nation: that the society which is formed upon Christian principles is the best and most orderly society; and the individual who conforms with most exactness to the precepts of the Gospel, is the most useful in his station and the most happy in himself.

The utility of the Sabbath depends upon its being a *religious* institution. A mere cessation from labour may be an indulgence; and, as I have stated, was intended to be such by its Author; but the peculiar distinction of the Sabbath is its religious character. Now whatever benefit arises from religion may be said to arise from the Sabbath; for without the Sabbath religion could scarcely exist. The Sabbath is the pillar which supports the temple of piety. It is the Sabbath which affords the opportunity of implanting right principles, of correcting errors, of shewing the nature of sin, of explaining the duties we owe to God and the grounds and reasons of them, of enlightening conscience and stimulating it to the performance of its functions. Were it not for the appointment of the Sabbath, and the ministry connected with it, how many are there who would have no means of knowing even the immediate and necessary duties which belong to their station in civil society! But they repair to the house of God. There, neglected children are taught the duty they owe even to their negligent parents. There the wife learns the duty of obedience; the husband of affection and tenderness. There, the duty of submission to government is enforced, and at the same time the duty of rulers is pointed out. There, the necessity of mutual forbearance and forgiveness is inculcated; and the duty of every man to renounce selfishness, and to seek the welfare of his brother rather than his own, is enjoined. There we are instructed in the reverence due to the aged; and in the kindness and compassion which ought to be shewn to the distressed and miserable. And there, above all, are inculcated those evangelical principles, and those pure and Chris-

trian motives, which only can be efficacious to produce holiness of life. Thus, as far as instruction will avail, are formed obedient subjects, dutiful children, prudent and tender parents, kind and faithful husbands, discreet and loving wives, mild masters and faithful servants, affectionate friends and kind neighbours. In a word, what is the obvious tendency of the Sabbath, but to promote the good of society; to persuade men to love without dissimulation—to be kindly affectionate one towards another, with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another—not to be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord—to distribute to the necessity of saints—to be given to hospitality—to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep—not to mind high things, but to condescend to men of low estate—to recompense to no man evil for evil—to provide things honest in the sight of all men—if it be possible to live peaceably with all men—not to avenge themselves, but rather to give place to wrath—to be subject to the higher powers, knowing that the powers that be are ordained of God; to be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake—to render to all their due; tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour—to owe no man any thing, but to love one another? Behold here the excellent tendency of the Sabbath! How, were it duly observed, would it banish discord, and tumult, and envy, and pride, from the world, and render society a resemblance of the blessed state of felicity above!

But the Sabbath was appointed also for the peculiar benefit of the afflicted. To the assembly in the house of God repair the mourner and the distressed; those who are sinking under the burden of poverty, of oppression, of despondency, or disease; the destitute and the friendless. There they are exhorted to bear their sufferings with patience, and to look to the Hand which corrects them, and the end for which they are chastened. The balm of Christian consolation is poured into

their wounds; their sorrows are soothed, and turned into a proper channel; and their hopes directed towards that better country, where "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick," and where "sorrow and sighing will for ever flee away."

Such are the beneficial effects upon civil society which the Sabbath is intended to produce. Within those hallowed walls a bond of sacred union is formed. Here meet together in Christian harmony those who else could have no intercourse with each other. Here they learn to consider themselves as forming one body. Here they partake of the same table, and kneel down in holy worship to one common Lord. Here they look up alike to one Father, unite in one common hope, and learn to love as brethren. And are not these designs great and important, and sufficient to recommend the Sabbath to every friend of mankind?

III. But these benefits, great as they are, are inferior to those which may be derived from it as *a religious ordinance*, calculated for the improvement of the soul; which I now proceed to consider.

But before I enter upon this part of my subject, allow me, my brethren, to call upon you to collect your thoughts. We are about to tread upon hallowed ground. Our thoughts should be elevated in proportion to our subject. I address you now as immortal souls, sojourning in this frail tabernacle of the flesh only for a few fleeting years, but destined, through the grace of the Redeemer, if you truly receive his salvation, to dwell with him for ever in glory. I call upon you, then, to consider your high original. You can call God your Father, for he has created you: you were even the chief of his works; you were formed by him in his own image. He gave you the grant of dominion over all his creatures. He placed you in a magnificent habitation. The spacious earth was formed to be your domain. The sun and moon were created to give you light. The plains around you were furnished with variety of good for your subsistence. The rest of the creatures

were given into your hands to be tributary to you. You alone were endued by your Creator with an unlimited capacity for intelligence; with powers to extend your knowledge far beyond the limits of the earth you tread—to penetrate into eternity; to understand the perfections of Him who is the fountain of all good; to pay obedience to his will revealed to you; to render him that tribute of honour and veneration which can be offered only by creatures of an high order. Yes; he formed you for himself, to shew forth his praise: he formed you to live for ever and ever in happiness.

True it is that you are fallen from your original state of glory. You have sunk into a state of degradation bordering upon entire ruin. But your heavenly Father, pitying your misery, has designed a plan to raise you from it, and to elevate you to a state of infinite glory. And the Sabbath was appointed both as an evidence of this gracious design, and as a means to promote it.

Consider the employments of man during the six days. In what is he engaged? Merely in things relating to this world, and to this poor perishing body; in ploughing the earth for food, in tending the cattle of the field, in hewing wood or drawing water, in providing raiment to defend these frail bodies from the coldness of the air, or building houses to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather. These employments, though absolutely necessary, must yet be considered as degrading, when we contemplate the immortal nature of man, and his high birthright. But look at man on the Sabbath. There you perceive the child of God, the heir of immortality! You behold him in the temple of his God, employed in a noble work—a work in which there is nothing mean, nothing sordid—a work in which angels themselves are employed. He is worshipping his heavenly Father: he is employing his faculties in a manner worthy of their original constitution:—his affections are fixed upon things spiritual and eternal;—his soul converses with God;—his thoughts launch out beyond the confined bounds of sense

and time, and expatiate in eternity;—his ears are listening to the word of God, and to the discovery of his will;—his tongue is speaking the high praises of God, or addressing him in supplication and prayer;—his eyes are lifted up to Him, who is the Father of lights and the God of the spirits of all flesh. Behold here the proper employment of the Sabbath, and see how it dignifies and exalts man!

During the six days, the object of our labour is to provide for the body—for the body, the inferior part of the man, often his disease and torment, always the vehicle of low and sensual affections, and the clog and incumbrance of the soul;—the body, that soon is to turn to corruption, and become the food of worms: which, notwithstanding incessant pains, can scarcely be kept in a state of tolerable health even for the few days of our sojourning here. But on the seventh day we direct our attention to the nobler part, the soul: we are engaged in promoting its moral improvement, in cultivating its transcendent powers, in labouring that it may be restored to the image of God.

During the six days, we are engaged in the petty concerns of this transitory life. I call them petty, because the life to which they relate is so very short and uncertain. It is but a span. For what are eighty, or a hundred years, compared with millions of ages? The proper life of man is his eternal life. Here, he is in his infancy, in his cradle.—But on the seventh day we lay aside our trifles: our occupations are those which respect the life to come; which have an influence upon our future, our eternal state. Our occupations on this day tend to prepare us for that state, teach us to value it, induce us to act as those who are in expectation of it. Then we live. Every other employment, however splendid, is but the play of children—on the seventh day we become men.

During the six days, what affecting scenes present themselves to us, arising from our occupation and intercourse with our fellow-creatures! To what care

and toil, and disappointment, and bitter anxieties are we subject! But on the seventh blessed day, our work is such as soothes our sorrows, and diffuses a holy tranquillity through the mind. In the proper occupations of that day, we meet with nothing to harass and vex the mind. The prospect before us is bright and serene—even an eternal day without a cloud! The objects of our contemplation on that day are truth, holiness, benevolence, justice, mercy. At the end of this waste and howling wilderness, through which we now travel with weary steps, we behold the brightness of a region of unruffled tranquillity and glory. We behold, and the fair prospect tranquillizes our minds: we turn from scenes of vanity and vexation. In this house, the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

During the six days, we are engaged in occupations which necessarily present scenes of temptation and defilement. We are connected with sinful men. We see them selfish and unjust, and we are tempted to be selfish and unjust ourselves. But on the blessed day of rest we converse not with man, but with God; with Him who is purity and holiness. His fair and spotless image is before our eyes: we contemplate his glorious attributes; we throw ourselves upon his mercy; we embrace his holy covenant; we perceive the beauty of holiness; we call upon our God for grace and assistance; and thus our hearts are strengthened against the attacks of temptation, and our souls purified by our occupations.

During the six days, though we feel and lament the disease of our corrupt nature, there is nothing in our regular employments to remedy it. But the seventh day is truly the day of healing, and the day of restoration. On that day we hear the glad tidings of a Saviour's work, and meet him in his own house, and at his own table. The good Physician there administers his precious remedies to our souls. Blessed day! dearer than light to our eyes, dearer than life to our souls, should be thy auspicious dawn: for thou art

the Lord's Day. Thou dost introduce us to the presence and worship of our Redeemer. By thee we are shewn the benefit of his death and resurrection, the value of his intercession, and the extent of his love. Thou art the resemblance and foretaste of that eternal Sabbath above, where the Redeemer reigns with his glorified servants in eternal bliss.

IV. There is still another light in which the Sabbath remains to be considered—as *a sign between God and man*. Thus it is stated by the Almighty himself: “I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and man.”

It is a sign on the part of God;—a most plain and illustrious sign of his willingness to receive and to bless mankind. The devils, who have irrecoverably lost the favour of God, have no such sign held out to them of his readiness to save them. The appointment of the Sabbath is, as it were, God's pitching his tabernacle among men—a sign that he will accept our worship, that the Throne of Grace is prepared for our prayers, and that the way to heaven stands open to all.

But it is a sign also on the part of man;—a sign that is, of his obedience to God. In this respect it operates as a test whether man will be obedient to God, or not. For so connected is the due observance of the Sabbath with every part of religious worship and practice, that it may be justly considered as the representative of the whole. And this is particularly the case with respect to nations. It is not easy to ascertain what sins are committed in private, and in families; but the Sabbath is the day when the whole nation openly makes profession of its faith, and gives a proof of its obedience to God. Now it is true that the sign may subsist without the thing signified: but if the sign is gone, if the form is abandoned, it is a very plain inference that the spirit must be gone also; that the nation has, as it were, shut the door of God's house, refusing to enter therein.

This view of the Sabbath, as a sign of our obedience to God, casts a high degree of importance upon the due observance of it. Indeed, it is the most melancholy spectacle which can be exhibited to a Christian mind, to see a man wilfully renounce the religious observance of the Sabbath. It is, in effect, the renunciation of his allegiance to God. It is, as it were, a public declaration, that he will not seek the mercy and grace of God; that he will not spare any part of his time, or sacrifice any portion of his pursuits and pleasures, in order to please God and to fulfil his will. With what awful propriety will it be said to such a person at the last day: "My Sabbath was a sign to thee of my readiness to bless and save thee; and thy continued disregard of it was a sign of thy contempt of me, and of my salvation!"

Permit me now to address this subject to your attentive consideration.

I call upon you all, my brethren, seriously to meditate on this great and important duty. Remember, the Sabbath is a sign on your part, and on God's. If the Sabbath is dishonoured and profaned, all the bulwarks of religion will be broken down; and infidelity and immorality will come in like a flood, and deluge the land to its utter destruction. If you have any regard to the welfare of the rising generation of your children—if you would wish them to be blessed in the favour of God—inculcate upon them a reverence for the Sabbath, and in your own persons set them an example of it. If you have any regard to the honour of God—any just fear of the awful day of judgment, when you must give an account to him of what you have done in the body—honour the Sabbath, and observe it as a day set apart for the glory of God and the good of your soul. It is a duty incumbent on man, in all orders and ranks of society.

You that are masters of families must set the example to your dependents: you must shew them that you spend not the day in idleness, or in secular concerns.

or in unprofitable visiting and feasting, but as a day in which you seek to honour and serve God. An awful responsibility lies upon you for the souls of your children and domestics: let them not be able to charge you with having set them a bad example, with having employed them unnecessarily in temporal affairs, with having prevented their worshipping God. Be clear of the blood of all men: be able to say before God, with respect to all that have been dependent on you, "I call them to witness that I was willing to suffer any inconvenience that they might have the opportunity of worshipping God." But you must go farther. You must press upon them their duty; you must instruct them in it; you must remonstrate with them if they neglect it; in a word you must labour to impress them with a conviction that there can be no hope of the blessing of God but in the conscientious observance of the Sabbath. You must also be ready to make sacrifices for this purpose. You must be willing to renounce a part of your gains, should it be necessary, rather than violate your conscience, and transgress the commandment of God, by breaking the Sabbath. It is a test whether you prefer spiritual blessings to temporal advantage; whether you value your souls more than your bodies, or would please God rather than man. In a word, let us all bear in mind, that in a very few years at the most, we shall lie upon a death-bed, and then the guilt of neglected Sabbaths will press as a heavy burden upon our souls. But may God grant that we so improve the Sabbaths below, that they may prepare us for an eternal Sabbath above!

SERMON XX.

ON SOUNDNESS OF MIND IN RELIGION

2. Timothy **ii. 7.**

For God hath given us the spirit . . . of a sound mind.

THE expression, *sobriety* or *soundness of mind*, is used in the Scriptures in various senses. Sometimes it is opposed to madness; as where the demoniac was found sitting at the feet of Jesus; clothed and in his right mind. Madness disposes men to act irregularly, furiously, and extravagantly. Soundness of mind, therefore, implies recollection, calmness, and discretion; the guidance and controul of reason; a disposition to examine coolly, to weigh impartially, and to determine according to the sober dictates of reflection, rather than by caprice or passion. In other places, soundness of mind is opposed to levity and impropriety, as where women are required to adorn themselves in modest apparel, with sobriety; or to intemperance and sensuality, as where young men are exhorted to be sober minded, and, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live so-

berly. Sometimes it is contrasted with pride and self-conceit: thus the Apostle forbids the Romans to think extravagantly of themselves, instead of thinking soberly, as they ought to do. In my text, the same expression is used in a more general and comprehensive sense. St. Paul is exhorting Timothy "to stir up the gift of God which was in him by the imposition of the Apostles' hands;" that is, to make full proof of his ministry, to use the spiritual powers entrusted to him, —to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering, not fearing the face of man; "for God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power," to enforce our injunctions, and to controul and punish the unruly; "and of love," to use our power for the good of mankind; and "*of a sound mind*:" we are well convinced of the truth of the doctrines we deliver, and of the propriety of the discipline we exercise; we are assured that we speak and act according to the will of God; ours is not an unfounded or foolish doctrine, it is not the raving of enthusiasm, nor a flight of fancy; we know what we speak, and declare the words of truth and soberness.

The state of mind thus described may therefore be considered as opposed to *credulity*, to *superstition*, to *enthusiasm*, to *scepticism*, and to *religious indifferece*. All these are proofs of a want of soundness or sobriety of mind.—The general characteristic of all unsoundness of mind may be said to be false perceptions. He whose mind is in this state dares not see things as they really are: they appear to him extravagantly magnified or diminished, distorted, or confounded with different objects. As the eye clouded by disease does not distinctly see the material objects presented to it, but confounds them with dissimilar things, or views them in an unnatural or distorted attitude; so the mind affected with this disorder mistakes what it perceives, and does not distinguish the real nature, rank, and value of the objects to which its attention is turned. A sound mind, on the contrary, forms a just view of the subjects pre-

sented to it: it estimates correctly the relative value and importance of different subjects, and is not governed by prejudice, caprice, or idle imaginations.

Having thus attempted to ascertain the meaning of the Apostle's expression, I shall proceed to consider soundness of mind in religion in the sense in which I conceive it to be used in the text.

I. Soundness of mind is opposed to *credulity*.—Credulity arises from a misapprehension of the nature and value of evidence. The credulous man believes on insufficient authority. He does not perceive the proportion which different kinds of evidence bear to each other. He is therefore apt to adopt, with equal confidence, opinions resting upon slight grounds and those which are built on the surest foundations. Hence the belief of lying miracles, absurd legends, and pretended visions prevailed for a long period in the church, to the disgust of every man of sound sense, endangering the credit of even the real miracles by which Christianity was first established. The present age is indeed more enlightened, and these idle tales are no longer credited; but the principle which caused them to be believed still remains. That principle is an undue value of the authority of man. How many in the church at this day receive the doctrines of Christianity, not on account of the evidence by which they are supported, nor because they are plainly delivered in Scripture, but because this or that particular man has held them! This evil is of wide extent: it prevails over the far greater part of the Christian church. All range themselves under the standard of some particular leader: "I am of Paul," saith one; "I of Apollos," another.—A still larger class, influenced by the very same principle, exerting itself in a different direction, adopts, upon the authority of men, a course of conduct and a system of doctrine directly opposed to the plain dictates of the Apostles. One man will believe only as his fathers before him have done; another will act just as the world around him is acting. Why should he presume

to be more religious than the rest of mankind? Thus error and irreligion are upheld, and continue their empire in the world.—The true remedy for this evil is to attend distinctly to the very different value of divine and of human authority. A man of sound mind will not despise human authority, and, in the spirit of innovation, doubt a tenet because it has been generally maintained; but he will be very careful to found his faith upon the truth of Scripture, rather than upon the opinions of men. He will be deeply sensible of the importance of that principle, “Call no man master;” he will give due weight to the lamentable proofs of human fallibility which have in all ages been exhibited to the world: he will see particular churches erring and contradicting each other, whole councils of men opposing the truth and sanctioning error. He will reflect, that every tenet, the most absurd, has in some ages or places been maintained; that there is no conduct, however palpably wrong, which some eminent men have not sanctioned. The external history of the Christian church has been the history of follies, or of errors the most serious and the most absurd, and of crimes perpetrated under the name of Religion. Never did a bold and confident innovator arise who did not find some person to revere him as an oracle of truth, and to receive all his extravagant positions. Deeply affected by this review, a man of sound mind will beware of attaching too much credit to any man, or to any sect or party: he will not believe every boasting pretender, but will take into his hands the sacred volume of revealed truth, and be guided entirely by the clear and express declaration of the Apostles and Prophets: “Here,” will he say, “I can find what I seek for in vain elsewhere; truth, unmixed with error, clearly revealed and established on indisputable evidence. Gladly will I rest on the authority of Christ, as my faithful Guide to direct me through this world of darkness and uncertainty; as my gracious Saviour from guilt and sin to whom I am under obligations which can never, even

through eternity, be repaid; who came from heaven to redeem me, who died for my sins, and who now is risen to make intercession for me. His word is truth; he is the light of the world; and I will implicitly rely on all that he or his inspired Apostles have declared, respecting the doctrines I ought to believe, and the course of life I ought to pursue."

II. Soundness of mind is opposed to *superstition*.—A person in the dark sees nothing distinctly, and is therefore very apt to form confused and erroneous ideas of every object around him: his imagination giving to them what form and colour it pleases. Such is the situation of a superstitious man with respect to all objects of a spiritual or religious kind: he sees nothing in its proper form and proportion. He fears he knows not what, and trembles at imaginary dangers: his reason bows under the force of his imagination. An illustration of this unsoundness of mind may be given in the belief which once prevailed of the influence of the stars on the fortunes of men, or in the belief of omens, and the unnecessary appearance on earth of spiritual beings. But a far more frequent and dangerous superstition is that which lays an undue stress on mere external religious observances. The whole religion of the heathen consisted of rites and ceremonies, which had no connexion with virtue or morality, but were imagined, they knew not how or why, to propitiate the Deity. It were well had such superstitions been confined to them; but, alas! in the Christian church a similar unreasonable value of mere ceremonies has been one of the most dangerous sources of error. A man, therefore, of a sound mind, while he attributes to forms and ceremonies their true value, will not substitute them for more substantial good. He will regard them as eminently useful in their proper place, as conducive to important ends, which they have a manifest tendency to promote: he will consider, also, how far they have been actually enjoined by our blessed Lord, and how far they have been invented by men.

and will proportion his respect for them accordingly. He will manifest the soundness of his mind by preferring the substance to the form, and by endeavouring to possess the spirit of religion, rather than the mere shadow of it.—Would to God that this rule of sound reason had been more generally observed! We should not, then, have had to lament those fierce contentions which have agitated the Christian church. We should not have seen one party unreasonably extolling every rite established by long usage, and proclaiming, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these!” and another party, with equal unreasonableness and narrowness of mind, attributing an excessive importance to ceremonies, as though the observance of them were idolatry, and preferring rather to break the peace and unity of the church, and to introduce a spirit of schism, than to conform even in things indifferent. When will men learn to reason soundly? When will they learn rightly to esteem the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy, and the love of God, and obedience to his law, and love to man, and tender compassion to his frailties? When will they perceive, as they ought, the real importance of true and substantial holiness, which will endure and flourish for millions of ages after this vain world, and all the forms and ceremonies established in it, shall have outlived their day and be remembered no more!—A sound mind, therefore, is one which rightly esteems holiness, and those things which are durable and really great. An unsound mind attaches an undue importance to trifles, to forms and ceremonies, to meats and drinks, to things which perish with the using.

III. Soundness of mind is opposed to *enthusiasm*.—Enthusiasm consists in unwarranted ideas of the nature of the relation between us and our Creator. A man of sound mind will cherish no extravagant notions of Divine communications. He will consider his own nothingness, and will form the most lofty conceptions of God, as chiefly manifesting his wisdom by the gen-

oral rules according to which he directs his administration. An enthusiast, on the contrary, conceives lofty notions of himself, and degrading conceptions of the Deity: he conceives that the course of nature is to be regulated with a view to his interest. The sun shines, or the rain descends, according to his occasions. Is he in want? God, at once and in some remarkable manner, sends him a supply. *Is he oppressed? The judgments of God fall upon his enemies.* Is he doubtful on any question? *The Spirit of God reveals it to him.* Is he disposed to act in any extraordinary manner? The ordinary rules, even of morality, must yield to his convenience. He and his immediate connections have a peculiar dispensation: they are the particular favourites of God; and all things are to minister to their exclusive good.

To guard against this dangerous error, some rules may be proposed which are consistent with sound reason and Scripture.

First. Let a man be humble: let him think of himself, as he ought to think, *obscurely and modestly*, as a poor sinful creature, very ignorant, and very liable to be deluded: let him consider it as an unspeakable favour to receive from God the pardon of his sins: let him remember, that it is the whole plan of God's dispensations to humble man, and to chastise the proud. No sin is more rebuked in Scripture than pride: nor is there any species of pride more criminal than spiritual pride. A man of sound mind will form a due estimate of his great unworthiness and meanness. What are we in the scale of God's creatures? What is this life; what the human understanding? What has been our conduct, but foolish and abominable? Shall man, then, be proud, and think highly of himself? What can be more odious in the sight of God; what less becoming a sinful creature, a rebel against God's authority, a bond slave and servant of sin, who should walk humbly all his days in the deepest abasement and contrition of heart?

Secondly. Let us learn to expect nothing out of the ordinary course of God's dispensations.—God has given a revelation to man, founded upon the strongest evidence, and expressed in the clearest terms: and it is presumption to expect another. In the Gospel, we find an explanation of the course by which God usually communicates grace and salvation to mankind. There we learn, that these blessings are conveyed by faith in the Redeemer, accompanied with an unfeigned repentance for sin and by universal holiness of life. A man of a sound mind will be content with this, and will seek no other way of salvation. He will not look for visions, or voices, or impulses to point out to him something new: he will not follow every new teacher, saying, Who shall ascend up to heaven, to bring down Christ from thence? or who shall walk into the deep, to bring up Christ from thence? But he will be satisfied with the word which is nigh to him, even in his mouth and in his heart; even the word of faith revealed in Scripture, — that if he shall confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in his heart that God hath raised him from the dead, he shall be saved."

Thirdly. Let it be remembered, that true religion is not a mystery hard to be discovered, and which can be known only to a few; but that it was intended to be made so plain, that the wisest and feeblest men might read, and the poor understand it. Our blessed Lord was remarkably plain and simple in his discourses, suiting them to the lowest capacity and evidently intending that all who possessed a weak and humble mind should understand them. Consider that true religion is not a novelty lately discovered, nor a mystery which is scarcely yet understood; but that, for 1800 years, it has been fully known and practised,—that even in the darkest ages, and the most corrupt churches, there have been true disciples of Christ, who always considered the Kingdom of God as consisting, not in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,—that the great difficulty has ever been, not the

want of knowledge, but the want of will to subdue our corrupt nature, to lead a holy life, and to walk humbly with God.

Fourthly. We should consider that the great evidence of wisdom is, to choose proper objects, and to pursue them in a lawful way.—Now the great end which we ought to set before us is the attainment of holiness, such as it is represented in Scripture, including our duties to God as our Father, to Christ as our Redeemer, to the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier, and to men as our fellow-creatures. The more soundly a man reasons, the more enlarged will be his views of holiness! It is the mark of an enthusiastic mind to adopt partial views; to undervalue, for example, our duty to God, in comparison with what we owe to man; or to think that one neglects one of our temper, and our social conduct, while we esteem highly the obligation of love to God, and of faith in his promise and word. I know no mark of a sound mind more unequivocal than the just and comprehensive view which it takes of the whole circle of duties; rejecting none, unduly preferring none, and esteeming the performance of any a compensation for the breach of others. In our views of religion, then, let not our frames or feelings, our imagined privileges, our views of doctrine, or even our devotions, be our guide in determining our state; but let us survey the whole of our conduct, and examine how far it accords with the tenor of Scripture. In this way we cannot err: this will prevent our overvaluing those marks and evidences, at best of a dubious kind, on which the enthusiast is disposed to rely.

The last means I shall notice, by which a sound mind will preserve us from enthusiasm, is, by its leading us to a just interpretation of Scripture.—Almost all religious errors are supported by false interpretations of the Bible; and hence it is vain to pretend to detect errors, till there is an agreement upon the mode in which Scripture is to be understood. Next a sound mind will be evident, in avoiding every fanciful, scanti-

ed, or mystical interpretation: and in receiving the plain, natural, and obvious sense of the words. In the application of Scripture, its exact meaning, as it was intended by the sacred writers with reference to the cases before them, will be first carefully defined; and it will then be considered how far the language of Scripture is applicable to ourselves, under our own circumstances.—A man of a sound mind will farther be careful to interpret Scripture according to the analogy of faith; comparing one part with another, and rather making a particular doubtful meaning bend to the rest of Holy Writ, than straining the whole word of God to accommodate it to one ambiguous or insulated text. He will also judge by the context, rather than by the letter: for the outline and scope of the sacred writer may be clear, where a particular expression is obscure: the general meaning, therefore, should become the guide by which doubtful expressions may be understood. He will also be peculiarly careful to mark such passages as appear to contradict any part of his system, not with a view of bending them to it, but of correcting his system by them. Perhaps there is no rule of greater importance than this in the investigation of truth. It is hopeless to attempt to convince him who reads only to strengthen his errors; who dwells only on such passages as seem to favour his peculiar notions.—I must repeat, that those Scriptures which appear to contradict our views, are to us the most important passages of Scripture. They should particularly engage our attention, because they prove that our views are not yet entirely those of the sacred writers: if they were, every expression used by them would be adopted with equal readiness by us.

IV. Soundness of mind is opposed to scepticism or infidelity.—I am well aware that infidels arrogate to themselves the distinction of being the only sound reasoners, and charge believers with credulity and superficial views. But the charge may justly be retorted on themelves: they do not possess a sound mind: for

The body of evidence by which Christianity is established, is incomparably superior to that by which any historical fact, or any other tenets whatever, have been supported. No other system of religion has had such keen and virulent opposers: on no other has the opposition gained so little ground with all sober and reflecting persons. No other subject has been so fully, so ably, so impartially examined: nor has any other creed been so generally received by wise and learned men, or so long maintained its ground in the world. No other system carries in itself such intrinsic marks of Divine truth, so little according with the secular interests or policy of mankind, or so directly applying itself to the real good of man. No other has made so many proselytes amongst the most deserving part of mankind: nor has any other had such an attestation to its worth as that which the noble army of martyrs have given to the Gospel of Christ. No other subject can at all approach in importance to this, which embraces the dearest interests of mankind, both in the present and in the future life, which alone claims the high prerogative of informing us what occurs when man is turned to dust, and is no more seen: which alone reveals to us the nature of that state from which none have ever returned: no other subject asserts the high distinction of being communicated to man by the great and glorious God—of declaring his will and pleasure. All other subjects of human inquiry are but the conjectures of man: this alone professes certainty and truth, unmixed with error. Now, when such a subject is submitted to us, what shall we say of those men, who with little ceremony, and as little reflection, turn away from it as an imposture, and refuse to listen to its decisions? I am sure that a sound mind would lead them to pursue a very different conduct. Unless it plainly wore the face of imposture, which no man can assert of Christianity, and which its intrinsic evidence, its dignity and purity, strongly refute, they would, if under the influence of a sound mind,

conceive themselves bound to examine very closely into the nature of its evidence; and if, after all their inquiries, they were unable to assent to the truth of it, they would at least regard it with the respect due to its own intrinsic excellence, to the illustrious men by whom it has been firmly believed, and to the beneficial effects which it has produced in the world. What an example is it, then, of unsoundness of mind, or rather of infatuation, when not merely men of learning, but persons whose habits of life have precluded them from much study or knowledge—men of debauched characters, the frivolous and the idle, the low and the uneducated—nay, even the young who have scarcely acquired the first elements of learning, presume to reject the authority and deride the sanctions of the Gospel! Such persons, but from the want of a sound mind, would ask themselves what they really know of the evidences of Christianity. They would consider that this is not a matter of mere speculation, nor a subject on which error can be matter of indifference; but that, if they err here, it is at the peril of their eternal salvation.

I do not now speak to bold and avowed infidels merely, for such persons are seldom present in these assemblies: but even here there probably are persons who, in a lower sense, correspond to the description I have given; who regard the question respecting the truth or falsehood of Christianity, with as little concern as any point of ancient history, or the opinions of the philosophers of Greece, who feel very indifferent whether the Bible is true or false, and therefore pay no practical attention to it.

I would earnestly and seriously entreat such persons to beware. They probably value themselves on their understanding and their superiority to the common weakness of mankind; but let them be reminded, that to disbelieve, not less than to believe too hastily, is among the plainest marks of a weak and foolish mind, and that such foolishness is never less pardonable than

when it relates to a subject enforced by such high authority, guarded by such awful sanctions, and big with such solemn consequences.

I stated, lastly, that soundness of mind appears in the text to be opposed to indifference about religion; but this part of the subject must be postponed to a future discourse.

In conclusion, I have to offer but one brief remark on what has been said. It is a rare thing to possess a sound understanding—an understanding which contemplates every object in its just magnitude, and in its real relation to others. Let us then be conscious of the natural weakness of our minds. Our great difficulty consists in discovering the defectiveness of our own sight. By superior spirits truth is probably perceived instantly, and without difficulty; to them it may appear like the sun, bright and glorious; but to us, who want the proper organs to discern this light, it too often appears dim and clouded, or is not discerned at all. We do not see distinctly, though surrounded by the light itself. This intellectual blindness is owing to the fall of man; and the Spirit of God alone can, in any measure, remove or rectify it. Let it then be your earnest prayer, that you may receive from him this blessing. To that end cherish a humble mind, a dependence on the influence of the Holy Ghost, and diligence in the use of all the appointed means of growing in true wisdom. Humility will render you sensible of your blindness, and dispose you to believe that you may be in error. It is the presumption that we are right, which keeps us wrong. Dependence on the Holy Spirit will remove the darkness which we may discover in our souls. If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of Him who giveth liberally and refuseth not. In the diligent use of those means of increasing in wisdom which God has placed in our own power, we may humbly expect to be made partakers of this gracious influence. Let us study the word of God diligently, examine our hearts

solicit and receive with meekness the counsel of our Christian brethren, attend with simplicity of heart on the preaching of the word, and partake of the holy communion of the body and blood of Christ; and in these appointed means of grace we shall, through the Divine blessing, have the darkness of our minds enlightened.

SERMON XXI.

ON SOUNDNESS OF MIND IN RELIGION.

2. Timothy i. 7.

For God hath given us the spirit . . . of a sound mind.

IN a former discourse upon these words, I considered soundness of mind as opposed to credulity, superstition, enthusiasm, and scepticism. I propose, at present, to consider it as opposed to *insensibility*, or *indifference to the great objects of religion*.

If you saw a man bartering his estate for a childish toy, or labouring to accomplish some object in its nature evidently unattainable, or using the greatest exertions and the most powerful means to effect some frivolous or contemptible purpose; or, on the other hand, struggling to accomplish some end really important, by means wholly inadequate; you would say, without hesitation, that such a man had not a sound mind. If you observed a man continually mistaking the objects around him, esteeming those valuable which were really of no worth, and regarding as worthless those of

the greatest value; flying from his friends and relations as enemies, and caressing strangers and enemies as friends: rejoicing when his situation was most melancholy, and weeping when he had no cause for sorrow; you would say at once that such a person was deranged. The cases I have supposed are, no doubt, of an extravagant kind; yet they are only strong examples of that unsoundness of mind, of that inability to perceive in a true and just light the objects presented to us, which in a greater or less degree appears to be the general disease of mankind. There are, indeed, few who apprehend all things within the sphere of their observation, according to truth and reason; a remark which a general survey of human life would strongly confirm. But I have at present only to do with religion; and I think no other instance can be produced of such extreme imbecility, of such a departure from every principle of reason, as we daily see in the conduct of men respecting this subject.

The great doctrines which religion teaches must be either false, or doubtful, or true. That they are false can never be positively proved. Such an opinion does not admit of proof. Nor do I know that any infidel has ventured to say more than that he conceives such an opinion to be very probably true. I shall not, therefore, dwell on that supposition. Let it be conceded; then, for the sake of argument, that these doctrines are doubtful. We have, then, a doubt of the most tremendous consequence: a doubt not about our existence or happiness for a year or two in this short life—that would be comparatively nothing—but a doubt respecting our eternal happiness or eternal misery.

“It is very clear,” (I use the words of Pascal), “that there is here no true and solid happiness; that our pleasures are but vanity, our troubles infinite; and that, at length, death, which threatens us every moment, must, in a few years, and perhaps in a few days, place us in the eternal condition of happiness, or mis-

ry, or annihilation. Life, the most frail thing in nature, is the only barrier betwixt us and heaven, or hell, or nothingness; and since the happiness of heaven is certainly not designed for those who doubt their immortality, they have nothing to expect but annihilation or hell.

“It is in vain for men to turn aside their thoughts from this eternity, as if they were able to destroy it by denying it a place in their imagination. It subsists in spite of them; it advances unobserved; and death, which is to draw the curtain from it, will in a short time infallibly reduce them to the dreadful necessity of being for ever nothing, or for ever miserable.

“Now, surely, in a doubtful point of this momentous consequence, it is the duty of every rational person to endeavour, if possible, to obtain a solution of his doubts, and to remain no longer in suspense about a question of such immense consequence, in comparison of which all the sorrows or happiness of this life will not bear so much as a single moment’s comparison. Yet we see persons, professing too to be wise, and raised above the vulgar herd, who not only doubt upon these points, but appear to be easy and composed, nay, declare their doubts with perfect indifference, and perhaps gratify their vanity in professing them. What words can be found to fix a name for such unaccountable folly?

“Yet you see the same persons quite other men in all other respects. They fear the smallest inconveniences: they see them as they approach, and feel them if they arrive. They pass whole days and nights in chagrin and despair for the loss of their property, or for some imaginary blemish in their honour;—and yet these very same persons suppose they may lose all by death, and remain without disquiet or emotion. This wonderful insensibility with respect to things of the most fatal consequence, and that too in a heart so nicely sensible of the meanest trifles, is an astonishing

prodigy, an intelligible enchantment, a supernatural blindness and infatuation."

I know no conceivable instance of infatuation which is more truly surprising than this, except that which, alas! is equally common; the believing all the truths of Revelation, and yet living without concern about them.

You believe the Scriptures. You are shocked at the incredulity of infidels. You do not doubt that the Son of God came down from heaven to reveal to you the invisible world, and to make known to you the eternal state.

You believe, then, that there is a future life, in comparison of which this is a mere point: sit down and contemplate the duration of it. Is it a life of a thousand years, of a million, or of millions of millions? Calculate every grain of sand on the sea-shore as a year, or a million of years, still your imagination would hardly have made an approach to an adequate conception of an eternal life. How does this idea bear upon the present world? It reduces its importance absolutely to nothing. This life shrinks before it a mere atom of time. But it must be observed, that what this little moment thus loses in duration it gains in rank and importance, when we consider its consequence. In this view, even eternity itself does not outweigh in the scale the short and fleeting moments of this life, because on this life our eternal state depends. Oh! moments big with importance in one view, vain and utterly trifling in another! Important as eternity itself, when considered as the scene of preparation for another world, as the space in which the irreversible sentence is to be passed, and the eternal state decided; though vain, and trifling, and unworthy a moment's thought, when compared with the infinite duration of eternity! Yet, O strange absurdity! we see every thing reversed: persons not at all interested about these fleeting moments on account of their relation to eternity, but very anxious about them in themselves! Such was

the case of the fool in the Gospel. He was extremely solicitous about the few minutes of his life: all his thoughts were occupied about it. He had been a prudent man, a careful manager: had foreseen all the evils of life: secured his property carefully: and now he meditates to take further care of his stores, that they might not be spoiled or wasted. But how does God address him? "Thou fool!" He was, indeed, a fool. No idiot could have been acting more foolishly. He had been very careful about minutes, and wasting years: he had been making a provision for this life, and thought he had secured it. And what was the life respecting which he was so anxious? He had not twelve hours yet remaining. But he had entirely forgotten to make preparation for the life to come. He had thought much of avoiding poverty and want, but had taken no pains to avert the displeasure of God and everlasting ruin. He had been anxious to avoid every petty loss, but had taken no pains to guard against the loss of his soul. And mark the consequence of his conduct. In an unexpected moment he is hurried away. He has lost every particle of his property: he finds himself in a new world, and sees at once how he has been losing his time, and wasting his talents in this. He has made no preparation for eternity: he is not meet for the kingdom of heaven. With all his prudence, he has omitted to make preparation for the solemn trial at the bar of God. He is found guilty of having neglected his God, despised his soul, and thrown away his salvation. Alas! how prodigiously foolish must such a one at length appear even to himself! To have accounted himself wise, and yet to have been so shortsighted; to have laboured hard all his life, in order to gain so little; to have bestowed so much care and thought, and yet to have acquired nothing against the hour of his utmost necessity, when the overwhelming justice of the Almighty should fall upon him: nay, by his negligence, by his love of earthly things, to have been ever heaping up to himself wrath against the day

of wraith, to have been labouring hard and submitting to much vexation and self-denial, but to aggravate his own destruction!

Was such folly confined to the men of old?—In the present day, are not men every where anxious and careful about their life, which is even a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then is gone? Yet these men are reckoned the prudent of the world, and declaim against the folly and thoughtlessness of others who do not provide for the few remaining years of this life, while they themselves have made no sure provision for the millions of years that are before them.

But they will perhaps deny this charge, and plead that they have been making provision for eternity: that their lives have been harmless and innocent; that at least they have been careful to avoid all flagrant and enormous sins; and that, therefore, they confide their eternal state to the mercy of their Creator. Now it is extreme folly to pretend to determine this question upon any ground but the express declarations of Scripture. We know nothing about the eternal state, the day of judgment, the purposes of God, or the final condition of man, but what it has pleased God to reveal in his word: we must therefore depend wholly on that word for information as to the exact kind and degree of preparation we ought to make. The Bible informs us of our danger, and must be our only guide how to escape it. Here, then, is folly and unsoundness of mind in the highest degree, that men will not search the Scriptures and be guided by the word of God. They hope they have provided for eternity, that they have made their peace with God, but upon what grounds do they believe this? The Bible they have not read: it has lain by them, unopened, for weeks together; for they have found no leisure, or, what is more true, have had no relish to read it: how, then, can they be sure that they have complied with the terms which the Gospel proposes? They think they know sufficiently what the Bible contains, and tell you

that it only requires us to lead good lives, and to trust in God's mercy. Alas! these vague and unfounded ideas shew clearly the Bible has not been read, or not read with that degree of attention which a just interest in it would excite. The folly is, that there is not the proportionate degree of attention and pains bestowed upon this important object which there is even upon the most trivial. Let men be in danger of losing any part of their property, and you see at once what pains they will take to understand their own case—how acute and diligent they will be in learning the intricacies of law; how ingenious in finding out plausible arguments on their own side. The reason is, that here they are in earnest; here they spare no pains: but about religion they are not in earnest. If occasionally to repeat a prayer, and to attend at church, will be enough to purchase heaven, they are willing to pay that price: but they have no wish to do more: and because they suspect that the Bible would require more, they refuse to read it. They know the Bible insists upon a life devoted to God, upon a true and lively faith in Christ, upon supreme love to God, upon deadness to this world, upon holy tempers and a life conformed to the pattern of our blessed Lord and Saviour. And they are conscious that they possess not these qualities: nor have they in truth a desire to obtain them; and therefore they are afraid to study the word of God, and try to deceive themselves with plausible excuses. They allege, that they are too much engaged in business to attend closely to these subjects, that they are not able to understand them, or that it is not incumbent on persons in their situation to enter into such inquiries. Thus constantly suspecting they are wrong, they yet take no pains to become right: they fear their danger, but turn away their eyes from it: they might know the truth, but do not choose to know it.

Now was the state of man such that there was no remedy for him, such conduct might be defended: but as the case stands, it shews an unconceivable degree of

unsoundness of mind. For God has removed the impediments in the way of salvation: He has made the path easy and plain: He has sent His only Son to become an expiation for our sins: He bids us come freely to him for pardon and eternal life: He promises us that he will graciously renew our nature if we apply to Him: that his Holy Spirit shall assist us, and shall work in us; and that His Son shall intercede on our behalf. Now here is infatuation, that all this kindness and tenderness on the part of God, and the extreme danger of refusing His invitation, and remaining exposed to his wrath, does not move us to consider our ways, and turn to him that we may live. On one side there is every thing to allure, on the other every thing to alarm us. A dreadful eternity of misery, a gulf of fire, yawns before us. God our Creator calls upon us to stop, tenderly invites us to flee to him for refuge, points to the gate of Heaven open to receive us, sends his Son to remonstrate with us, and yet we will not hear. Without alarm we go on, without concern we persist: we say, Tush! we shall not perish: God will be merciful; or, Let us eat and drink and enjoy the present life: for who knows any thing about that which is to come? How would such a conduct with respect to temporal affairs be thought of? Would it not be esteemed a clear proof of insanity? Surely it cannot be less so when the reasons are infinitely more strong, and the conduct proportionably more preposterous.

But what shall we say, then, to the presumptuous sinner; to the man who knows perfectly, that, if there is any truth in religion, he is condemned by it without hope? Yet there are thousands of our fellow-creatures who are living in this state, who profess to believe the Bible, and indeed know of no material objection to its truth: yet they there read, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Now they know that they are

guilty of some of these vices, and yet they are easy. What would they think of a man upon whom the sentence of a cruel death was passed, and who had not an hour to live, if they saw him busy about worldly affairs, and amusing himself with trifles? Would they not justly ask, Is he in his senses? Does he know his doom? Yet this is the case with themselves. Surely as the Revelation of God is true, they will perish eternally, if they die in their sins; and yet they are easy and unconcerned. What excuse do they make for their folly? Perhaps they say, they shall repent hereafter. But can they suspend the approach of death? Are they sure they shall live through the present day? Although not certain of life a single moment, they yet encourage themselves in sin, in the hope of its duration; they use the very patience of God as an argument for provoking him still more and more, and for adding to the number and guilt of their sins. In this state I believe thousands are living, who entertain very little hope of their condition: or rather are self-condemned, but who will not reflect and turn to God. Is it that they are happy as they are? No: they, like others, feel the troubles and disappointments of this wicked world; but they do not perhaps think they should be happier if they did really become religious. Would they not? Let them reflect a moment. Who has enjoined religion? Is it not God, the Father of all good? Where is religion chiefly found? Is it not in heaven, the seat of supreme felicity? Where do irreligion and disobedience to God prevail? Is it not in hell, the seat of misery? Are the profligates upon earth, or those who are most obedient to God, the most happy? Perhaps it is impossible to find a stronger instance of unsoundness of mind than that of supposing, that the very thing which God has enjoined for our good can conduce to our misery.

There is, however, no end to the instances of extreme folly which prevail in the world on the subject of religion. What shall we say to the *daring profligate*, who sets Heaven at defiance? Could he calen-

late the risk he runs, how prodigious would his folly appear! The mere possibility of coming short of heaven, and of being doomed for ever to hell, might justly occupy every thought of a really wise man, and lead him to direct all the force and powers of his soul to the single object of escaping such misery, and obtaining such happiness. He might justly make this the one only concern of his life. And yet these men madly rush upon eternal destruction, and laugh at the threatenings of God. What shall we say also to the folly of the *person who professes religion*, who is constantly hearing sermons, and reading the Bible; yet at the same time indulging evil tempers, leading a careless, unholy life, and preserving the form of religion only without the spirit of it? Such a one must know his guilt: every thing must tend to excite in him fearful apprehensions; yet he goes on without one earnest and vigorous endeavour to be freed from the shackles of the sin which so easily besets him—always condemned; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; ever hoping and intending, but never doing any thing; ever hearing of a Saviour, but not experiencing his power. Religion is here his torment, and will but aggravate his wretchedness hereafter.—What shall we say also to the very great folly of those who continually *dis-trust the providence of God*? We believe that there is a great and powerful Being, who directs all things according to his will, and who hears even the young sparrows that cry to him; whose peculiar glory it is to be the Father of the universe, and to give to all breath, and life, and food, and all things convenient for them. Yet, as if there were no such Being, as if every thing were left to chance, and to the determination of man, how many are there who are seeking in an unlawful way for the things of this life, who pay no regard to the providence of God, and seek to prosper without him, or even in defiance of him!—How many, in like manner, are guilty of the inconceivable folly of *fearing man more than God*! They tremble lest they should

incur the resentment of their fellow-creature, whose breath is in his nostrils; but they are not afraid to incur the high displeasure of that God at whose look the earth trembleth. If God is our Friend, we may well say, Who shall make us afraid? If God is our Father why should we be distressed on account of the opinions of men? Hear the forcible reasoning which God himself uses on this subject:—"I, even I, am he that comforteth you. Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth, and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy: and where is the fury of the oppressor? But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared; the Lord of Hosts is my name."

In all these cases, an obvious unsoundness of mind manifests itself. The person entertains no proper perception either of the things of this world or of those of the world to come; either of God or of man. He is infatuated. His mind is in an unsound state. He is blind, and sees nothing distinctly or clearly. Let us not however, suppose that this infirmity excuses him. He is blind because he will not see; he has faculties, but he will not use them. The light glares, and he wilfully turns from it; loving darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. Were it a necessary infirmity that man should reason so foolishly and weakly, he might be an object of pity, but not of blame: but he clearly shews that he possesses the faculty of judging better, because we see him exercising it wherever his interest or inclination requires it. And, indeed, as soon as, through the influence of the Spirit of God, he seriously directs his attention to these subjects, he begins to reason justly, to feel properly, and to act righteously.

Let us suppose a man becoming sensible to the importance of eternal things, and beginning to judge with a sound mind. He stands astonished at the very different aspect in which the objects around him now appear. Enlightened by the word and Spirit of God, this life appears but a mere point in comparison with eternity; and all the bustle and hurry of this world, all its cares, pursuits and pleasures, shrink into nothing in his view. He sees the world to be a vast Babel, in which men are reasoning and acting like froward and foolish children; transported with empty joys, depressed with imaginary sorrows, fearing where no fear is, and not alarmed by the most awful dangers pressing upon them. He reflects upon himself: "I am a dying creature," he says; "here to-day, and to-morrow removed from this transitory scene. But I have an endless being. I do not live here, but I shall live above. There is a world where the objects are really important, because eternal. I see a glorious state, a blessed society, free from pain, from weakness, from decay, from sin the chief evil: I see an assemblage of blessed and happy spirits, all properly and wisely employed, fulfilling perfectly the will of their Creator. I see a great and glorious Being, whose will extends to every part of the creation; who giveth life, or taketh it away; who appoints to every one his lot; who setteth up kingdoms, or pulleth them down; who disappointeth the counsels of the wise; who directs all the actions of men according to his will. This glorious Being," he will say, "offers himself to be my Father, and that glorious state to be my home. He tells me that the world I now live in is a poor, empty, transitory state, lying under his displeasure and curse, in which no true happiness is to be found. He bids me not to be engrossed by its vanities and follies, but to look above; to live as the inhabitant of another state; to prepare for death and heaven, and, above all, to listen to his only begotten Son, whom he has sent into the world to be the resurrection and the life, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Such is the true view of things. The man who possesses this view is come to his senses: he uses his faculties, and, in consequence, there is a complete revolution in his opinions, maxims, and conduct. This revolution is what the Scripture means when it speaks of a Christian as a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things become new. This is being born of the Spirit; being illuminated by the Spirit of God, that he may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints. This view makes him indifferent to the serious pursuits of others, and tranquil in the midst of those cares and sorrows which agitate his fellow-creatures: he sees them to be little and trifling, compared with eternal things. This view makes the favour of God the only thing desirable, and the displeasure of God the only thing dreadful. This view makes him pass through this life as a pilgrim and stranger, looking forward to a better country, and fixing his affections in heaven, where Christ his Saviour reigns, and where he hopes soon to be admitted. This view disarms death of its sting, and teaches him how to employ life. The man now lives as an immortal being, the heir of Heaven, the son of God, under the tutorship of his Spirit.

My brethren, has such a change of view taken place in you? Do you thus think of the world, and of life; of God, and of man; of sin, and of holiness? In a word, is your nature renewed, or are you seeking that it may be renewed? I leave this for your serious consideration. In the words of an illustrious author, "the only rational men in the world are those who either know God to be their God, and are living to him; or those who, not knowing it, are making it their whole endeavour to attain this knowledge, and to live according to this rule."

SERMON XXII.

ON THE PURPOSES OF GOD IN CHASTENING MAN.

Deuteronomy viii. 2—6.

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee; to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger; and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore, thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and to fear him.

IT is an excellence peculiar to the Bible, that it not only, like other histories, relates facts and events, but, with a degree of truth and authority which no other book can claim, assigns the grounds and reasons why such events were permitted, and explains the real causes by which such facts were produced. In the Bible, God himself is pleased to withdraw the veil which in general conceals the springs and motives of his actions, and makes us in some degree acquainted with the designs of his Providence and the laws of his government.

Of this insight into the course of the Divine administration, the history of God's dealings with the children of Israel may be considered as affording a grand and striking illustration. It is true that we find, in that history, miraculous interpositions, which are not now to be expected; but these were only intended to give a more sensible exhibition of that power which acts as really, though not so ostensibly, at other times. Miracles do not alter the principles upon which the Almighty acts, but only display those principles more conspicuously. They do not indicate a different Agent, but only manifest the conduct of the same Agent in a more direct and express manner.

The history of the Jews is also remarkable, as being the *only* exhibition of the kind ever given to the world: The event is related, and the Almighty himself stands by and explains it, gives a comment upon it; and shews, in many cases, what he designed by it, and how such or such an event bore a reference to this or that nation, or to the general purposes which he had subsequently in view with respect to mankind at large. This history, therefore, taken in connexion with the writings of the Prophets, is a most interesting and valuable guide; enabling us to lay down the outline and general principles by which the Divine administration is carried on in the world.

In the words of my text we find an explanation of the reasons why God permitted the Israelites to wander

for forty years in the wilderness, after he had brought them out of Egypt, before he suffered them to enter into the promised land. It was, no doubt, appointed partly as a punishment for their unbelief and rebellion. But they might have been punished in various ways: and this particular method was chosen by God to answer several purposes of the highest wisdom and importance. He determined that they should dwell so long in the wilderness; that they should endure so many afflictions, and be often brought very low—at the same time that he was feeding them daily, and miraculously preserving even their raiment from decay—that these two grand purposes, amongst others, might be fully accomplished:—first, that they might learn thoroughly to know themselves; and, secondly, that they might learn to know their absolute dependence upon God. “The Lord led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee: to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy feet swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore, thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and to fear him.”

Let us consider, then, more at length, in what manner God tried the Israelites in the wilderness—what were his designs in doing this—and for whom these designs were accomplished. These subjects will furnish abundant matter for our instruction, and the improvement of the various events of our own lives.

I. The way in which God tried the Israelites in the wilderness was this:—He was perpetually exposing

them to difficulties and dangers, which were calculated to try the strength of their faith and trust in him. At one time, their fears were excited by the report of the warlike condition of their enemies, who threatened to destroy them by formidable armies. Now, they were alarmed by the dread of being starved in the wilderness: having no cattle with them, and seeing no human method of sustenance, except what they could gain with the sword from the hostile nations around them. Now they were distressed by the want of water in the parched and sandy desert, where a supply could scarcely be obtained for a small caravan, much less for a whole nation. Then again the fears of the prudent and cautious amongst them would greatly be excited by the want of clothing for so vast a multitude, in a place where none could possibly be procured. At another time they were terrified by the appearance of dreadful serpents, whose venomous bite caused certain death. Thus one source of alarm and fear, and one danger after another, continually presented themselves to every cautious and reflecting mind.

Here, then, I beg you to observe, that God who had chosen the children of Israel for his own peculiar people, wisely and deliberately intended to bring them into these straits and difficulties, and to expose them to these various dangers. It was a special act both of his goodness and of his wisdom, shewn to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom he loved, thus to discipline them and to instruct them, that he might do them good in the latter end. Let us, then, neither be surprised, as if some strange thing had happened to us, when we fall into divers temptations, nor dejected as though it were a proof of God's neglect of us. It is in reality a presumption of his attention to us, and of his regard for us: "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

The conduct of God is described in a following verse by a metaphor taken from that of a father to his

son:—"Then shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." He not only brought them into trials, but corrected them for their disobedience. He did not pass by their transgressions, but punished them, and taught them clearly to perceive that he would not suffer them to sin against him. Very glad would they probably have been if he would have left them to themselves, like the nations around them; but he had too great a regard for them to do so. He chastened them—he kept them in a state of discipline continually,—that they might more thoroughly learn the important lessons which he intended to teach them, and be more fully prepared and fitted for the blessings which he intended to bestow on them.

II. What, then, were the designs which God had in view in thus bringing the Israelites into these difficulties, and in thus correcting them?

1. The first was, that *they might know themselves*, that he might humble them, and prove them, to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or no.

The Israelites did not appear likely to be very proud while they were in Egypt. As far as great poverty and a most abject state of bondage can humble a people, they were likely to be humbled, under the power of Pharaoh; but there may be much depression of spirits, and an abjection even bordering on despair (as seems to have been the case with the Hebrews, when they entreated Moses to let them alone, and not attempt to deliver them,) without any true self-knowledge, or real humiliation. True humiliation springs from a thorough acquaintance with ourselves: from much observation of the manner in which we act, under various circumstances of trial, particularly after we have been blessed with great mercies. Hence it pleased God first to distinguish the Israelites by very uncommon blessings. They were brought out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and a stretched out

arm, and with most signal displays of Divine power and mercy. The laws of nature were suspended for their protection, and the enemies who had oppressed them were left dead at their feet. At first they appeared to be very grateful to God their Deliverer. They acknowledged his mercies, and loudly sang his praises: but the time was yet to come in which the sincerity of their gratitude would be tried and proved. And God soon furnished them with abundant opportunities (which were doubtless improved by all who were truly pious amongst them) of knowing themselves thoroughly, and of being most deeply humbled. For how did they act when brought into circumstances of trial? When the spies made a report of the formidable power of the Canaanites, they immediately gave way to alarm and fear, as if God, who had brought them out of Egypt, and destroyed Pharaoh, could not save them. When they wanted bread, they murmured against God, as if he had lead them out into the wilderness only to destroy them. When they were destitute of water, they cried out that they should perish by thirst. They were miraculously supplied with manna; and then they longed for flesh. They were surrounded by the visible proofs of God's presence—the pillar, the cloud, the thunders and lightnings, on Sinai; and yet they called upon Aaron to make them gods like the nations around them, and to lead them back again into Egypt! In a word, if they paid any attention at all to their state, they might plainly discern in themselves the most base *ingratitude*, the most shameful and unreasonable *distrust* of their great Benefactor, the most disgraceful predominance of *carnal* appetite over reason and duty, the most inexcusable folly and sinfulness. Their knowledge of themselves proved only the knowledge of their depravity; and if they had a spark of generous feeling left, they would be for ever ashamed of themselves, deeply repent of their sinfulness, confess that they were totally unworthy of the least of God's mercies, and never again open their lips in justification of them-

selves, in murmuring against God, or in censuring others.

We may remark, here, that the circumstances in which the Israelites were placed did not *create* the sinful dispositions which they manifested, but only called them forth. The dispositions were there before; and God clearly saw their true character, though, till their trials had brought them into action, they would not probably have conceived that there could be so much evil in them. Had the Israelites been exposed to no particular dangers and temptations, they would probably not have appeared more corrupt than any other people; but their trials were uncommon, and their sinfulness was, it must be allowed, extreme.—Self knowledge consists not only in knowing what we *have* done, but in knowing what we *may* do, when temptation calls out our latent depravity. This is seen by God; but men only view it when it appears in action, and therefore often judge favourably of themselves, when, if they knew their own hearts, they would see much cause rather to be humbled for their corruption.

It appears, then to be the will of God, that men should know themselves thoroughly, and of course be deeply humbled for their unworthiness, and sincerely repent of their sins. And, in fact what is this knowledge but the knowledge of truth? While we think highly of ourselves, we are in a state of delusion: we do not see things as they really are; but are totally deceived as to our true situation, and therefore must form a wrong judgment respecting every thing around us: for where a man is grossly mistaken as to some fundamental point, his ignorance will possess more or less influence with respect to a great variety of other truths which are dependent upon it, so that he will form a wrong judgment concerning them also. If, therefore, a man has not a proper knowledge of himself and his true state, he can form no right judgment concerning God, concerning his dispensations towards him concerning the redemption of Christ Jesus, or concern

ing eternal life. We may be well assured, that it is of the utmost consequence that we should thoroughly know ourselves, since God suffered the children of Israel to wander forty years in the wilderness, that he might teach them this knowledge.

2. But the second point, in which it was the intention of God to instruct the Israelites, and in them all mankind, was *their absolute dependence upon himself*. "He fed them with manna, which neither they nor their fathers had known," in order that he might make them know that men do not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord do men live.

If ever pains were taken by the Almighty deeply to impress any truth upon the mind of man, it was that of entire dependence upon himself as the Author and Giver of all good. This he laboured to inculcate upon the minds of the Israelites by the whole course of his proceedings. They were brought out of Egypt, not of their own motion or choice, but by his special call. He had provided a country for them, and he charged himself with conducting them into it. Pharaoh resisted them; difficulties were multiplied to oppose them; but every difficulty served only to enhance the greatness of the power which overcame it, and to point out more manifestly the hand of the Most High. The sea opened a passage for them, and swallowed up their pursuers; the strong rock in the desert poured out for them copious streams of water, which followed them in their course: a cloud miraculously shaded them from the intense heat by day, and a pillar of fire gave them light by night: manna fell around them, in sufficient quantity to support them all abundantly: their clothes waxed not old upon them, nor did their feet swell: quails came daily, and fell around their camp in such abundance as amply to supply all their wants. Were they bitten by serpents? they were miraculously healed by only looking to one of brass. Did they want to pass over into the country which God had given them?

the waters of Jordan flowed back, and left them a dry passage through its channel. And the walls of their enemies' cities fell down at their approach.—Could any facts indicate in a more striking manner the presence and the agency of the Almighty God? This was the very knowledge he intended to inculcate. He wished them to be thoroughly convinced—to be *practically* convinced, I mean (for there is a great difference between acknowledging the presence and agency of God with the understanding, and acknowledging them with the heart)—of the continual presence, constant superintendence, never-ceasing agency of that glorious Being who made us, and in whom we live and move and have our being.

More important knowledge than this of the providence of God, cannot be learned by men. While we thus practically know the power and presence of God, we shall feel the dispositions which that knowledge ought to inspire: we shall watch over our conduct with a filial dread of offending him; we shall place an unbounded confidence in his wisdom to direct, his power to strengthen, his providence to defend, his goodness to bless us; we shall cease to have any will of our own, and become anxious only that his will should be done; we shall submit to him with perfect resignation, and endeavour in all things to obey his commands. This was the great end and aim of all the discipline with which God visited the Israelites in the wilderness. “Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways and to fear him.”

Here let me remark, that the designs of the Almighty, in his dispensations towards the Israelites, were wholly of a moral and religious nature. He had it not in view merely to give them temporal happiness—that would have been a small thing;—nor merely to conduct them safely through the wilderness to Canaan:—it was his object to detain them for forty years under a state of moral discipline, to give them the knowledge of some most important truths: nor did He, who ap-

preciates every thing according to truth, think that the wandering even for forty years, and this long exposure to continual trials and distresses, was too great a price for the important acquisitions which they were to make.

Let us observe, from this remarkable history, the difference between the views of God and man. Man looks only at present things, God at the future: man has respect to the few minutes of this life, God to the endless ages of eternity: man considers the body only, God the soul: man wishes to dwell in carnal security, God would have him improve in the knowledge of Divine truth: man like the Prodigal Son, would depart from God, and be subject to no controul; God, like a wise and kind father, will not suffer him to leave him: he follows him with trials and distresses, to bring him back to his father's house. The object of man is only to enjoy himself here; that of God is to fit him for a higher and glorious state hereafter.

III Having thus taken a view of the purposes of God toward the Israelites in the desert, it remains that we consider for whose instruction these designs were accomplished.

And here I must revert to my former observation, that God gave, in his conduct to the Israelites, an example to the whole world, of the objects which he has in view, and of the purposes he proposes to accomplish, in his dispensations with man, and of the manner in which he does accomplish them.

I would address you, then, my brethren, as a congregation of the people of God who are yet in the wilderness. You are travelling through the wilderness of this world: God is leading you, as members of the church of Christ, to a heavenly Canaan, a land of eternal rest; but in the mean time he detains you for a season in the desert, for the very same ends as he detained the Israelites, that he may humble you and prove you, to know what is in your hearts, and that he may cause you to know that man doth not live by

bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Do you consider, then, my Christian brethren, that you are now under a state of discipline? Do you know that you are, like the children of Israel, under the guidance of God, conducting you to a better country? The thought is a very interesting one; and God grant that I may speak to your hearts, while I endeavour to set forth the views and designs which he entertains towards you!

In the first place, he makes use of afflictions and trials to prove you, as he did the Israelites of old. These trials you have doubtless felt; but have you seen the hand of God in them? Have you considered that this is part of the discipline and chastening which God in his infinite mercy exercises over you. It is the nature of man to be stupid and insensible with respect to Divine things, or Divine teaching. God speaks plainly, but man will not hear. God manifested his presence sufficiently to the Israelites in the wilderness; but they were slow in learning that he was ever with them to instruct and to bless them, and that what they suffered or enjoyed proceeded from him. How little does the world in general look at the appointment of God in all their trials!—One man has loved the partner of his bosom, the companion of his soul, who alone gave to life its sweetest enjoyment: he now deplores her loss, and is ready to throw away life as no longer of any value. He asks why God should so blast all his prospects: God does it to humble and to prove thee. Thou wert, perhaps, setting up thy rest in this wilderness of the world. Thou wert living to thyself, unmindful of the end of thy creation, of thy Maker, and of a future state; and God has now awakened thee to see what this world is, that thou mightest seek earnestly for a better, and endeavour to know thy God, that thy soul may be saved in the day of judgment. Another has laid his schemes so wisely that he cannot fail of attaining wealth and prosperity. He has used all possible pre-

cautions, and exercised the utmost care which prudence can suggest. But, behold, his schemes do not succeed. Events, totally unexpected, occur and blast them: and he blames this or that person, or vents his anger upon outward circumstances. Let him know that God has observed his plans, and has chosen to disappoint them. Why? It is a part of his paternal discipline: the reason you may see hereafter very clearly, and bless God for it. You loved the world too well; and it was kind in God to give you such a check.—Another person sets out with high expectations of attaining fame and reputation for talents or science. His hopes are every day fairer. But perhaps a fever interposes, and destroys the capacity for application, and defeats all his expectations. How cruel! he is ready to exclaim; how cruel the disappointment! How wise, and how gracious! will every one say who is properly sensible of the wisdom and goodness of the designs of God. It is said in Scripture that there are some whom God leaves to themselves to prosper in the world. They have children at their desire: they come into no trouble like others: whatever they do succeeds in their hands. This the Scripture teaches us to consider as no certain sign of the good will of the Lord. “As for me,” says the holy Psalmist, “all the day long have I been afflicted and chastened, every morning.”—You see then, my brethren, the light in which those various disappointments and trials, which are so grievously complained of in the world, are viewed by the Almighty: he sends them as mercies to you: Will you receive them as such? Do you so value the beneficial ends which God proposes by them that you will cheerfully welcome the trial for the sake of the spiritual advantage? It is well for us that God does not consult us with respect to his appointments. We should no more approve them than a child does of our correction. We do not love to be thwarted and disappointed: but it is often very profitable to us, to humble us, and to teach us what is in our hearts. I wish, my brethren, to im-

press you deeply with a conviction of God's appointing all the various trials of your state, that you may learn to say, I behold in this the hand of God: this is my Father's rod. What have I been doing? What would he have me do?

There is an importance and a dignity given to our trials, when we regard them in this light; as the world generally views them, they are bitter indeed. Stupid and insensible, how many only lament their hardships, and try either to forget their sorrows, or to acquire fresh comforts.—Brutish conduct! Did not thy Father appoint thy trials? Had he no end to answer by them? Does he willingly grieve and afflict the children of men? Know the rod, and who hath appointed: that it is His hand, and that He corrects thee with the tenderness of a father.

What, then, is his aim? It is to teach thee to know thyself and him.—*To know thyself.* You will tell me, perhaps, you do know yourself sufficiently; you will acknowledge you are a weak, sinful creature. To say this from theory only, is a very different thing from saying it from experience. Self-knowledge is not soon taught: it is not learned in a day, or a month, or a year: a whole life is well spent in attaining it. You cannot acquire it merely by reading books, or by meditating on it in your study: it must be the result of long and painful observation of your own heart.—Job was a wise and good man: but he never knew himself till after his severe trials. Be content, therefore, and thankful to learn in the church of Christ; and never think you know yourself aright, till the sense of your own ingratitude, corruption, and unworthiness affects you with the deepest self-abasement, and leads you to true repentance.

But God designs also to teach you to *know him*. Now, it is the very disgrace of our nature that we do not know God, so as at all times to entertain the most perfect confidence in him. You are amazed at the stupidity of the Israelites: they had so many proofs of the

presence of God! and have not *you* as many? Does not every thing around you indicate the presence of an almighty, wise, and gracious Being, as the miracles did to the Israelites? But what use do you make of them? There is an atheistical principle in the hearts of all men. Is this eradicated? Do you acknowledge God in all things? Do you see his hand? Do you trust his wisdom and goodness? Do you, in a word, refer to him in all things, fear him, love him, serve him, obey him?

You see, my brethren, in what light this subject places the present world, and our occupation in it. God acts according to his own maxim, that the care of the soul is above all things important: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" You see that the salvation of the soul is made the chief object in God's esteem, and it should be so in ours. We are perpetually living in error: we think this world, and the things of it, important; but God thinks them of no value, except as instrumental in the work of converting or edifying the soul. Thus learn to think of all the events of this life: be convinced that they are important only as they relate to another.

Further; repine not at God's discipline. He intends to do you good hereafter, and in the mean time he wishes you to depend wholly on himself for every blessing. He is good, infinitely beyond all your conceptions. Look forward to the glory ready to be revealed. Is it not worth while to submit to discipline for such a prize? Be not, then, like the Israelites, stubborn and faithless; disobedient to God, and perpetually provoking him to anger, though he was their Friend and Father, and doing them good continually. Trust thou in the Lord, and be doing good. Leave every thing here to his disposal, and truly you will have cause to the end to adore his goodness.

Lastly; let this subject lead you to reflect upon the manner in which it pleases God to save us through Jesus Christ. It was God who brought the Israelites

out of the house of bondage, and from the land of Egypt. By the Angel of his presence he saved them: by his almighty power he protected and delivered them: and, in like manner, to the mercy and goodness of God alone we must be indebted for our deliverance from worse than Egyptian bondage, and for an entrance into the heavenly Canaan. God hath sent his beloved Son to be our Conductor and Guide—Him are we to follow: his voice we are to hear: he is to be our Saviour: and as it would have been the highest degree of presumption and madness for the Israelites to have attempted to deliver themselves from Pharaoh by their own power, or to plant themselves in Canaan by their own might: so it is equally absurd and vain in us to expect salvation except from the mercy and grace of Christ. As God glorified himself by the destruction of Pharaoh, as he magnified his power in the sight of the whole world by conducting the Israelites through the wilderness: so does Christ magnify himself as the Captain of our salvation in his triumph over the enemies of our souls.—Let us, then, humble ourselves: let us be deeply conscious of our unworthiness and corruption; let us place no confidence in our own resolution, wisdom, or power; but place all our dependence, with gratitude, with hope, and with obedience upon him who is mighty to save—upon the Redeemer, who saw and pitied our wretched estate: who saw that there was no one to help us, and therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him, and his righteousness it sustained him. He is the only Saviour of sinners, and he requires of them humiliation, and dependence on himself, that we may not boast before God, but that all the glory and honour may be ascribed to Him. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

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